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PERCY LOCKHART.

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PERCY LOCKHART;

Or, the Hidden Will.

By FRANCIS WILLOUGHBY BAXTER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL I.

LONDON:
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1872.

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PERCY LOCKHART.

CHAPTER I.

If a man would live well, let him fetch his last day to him, and make it always his company keeper.

JOHN BUNYAN.

That we must all die we always know; I wish I had sooner remembered it.—DR. JOHNSON.

THERE are few things so appalling as the approach of death to one who has great possessions, and to whom those have been the sole or chief consideration of life. It seems something like an impossibility that he should be bereft of them: that his manor-house and his grounds, his well-stocked

preserves, his wine-cellar, his horses and his hounds, should actually become the property of another,—that the very trees, which he had planted and trained with so much care, should continue to put forth fruit and flower, and rock themselves in the summer breezes, after he is away and forgotten,—and that very soon the meanest domestic who has worn his livery and trembled at his frown should, in temporal authority and worldly possessions, be greater and richer than he. Death does, indeed, with equal pace, travel to the doors of the rich and the poor, and knock with as little ceremony at both; but his dread summons falls on the ears of his victims with very different effects. From one he takes away a life which has been embittered by all that renders life worthless; from another, not only life, but all that is supposed to make it sweet.

In a richly-furnished apartment lay Sir

David Lockhart, of Rosemount and Glenthorn, smitten by a lingering but mortal disease. No great pain attended his malady. Pain, in his state, would almost have been a blessing; it might have distracted his mind from contemplations of unspeakable horror—the body bearing part of that agony which was all-concentrated in his thoughts. It was broad and brilliant day, but the window-curtains were carefully drawn, so as to exclude the grand outward picture of hill and dale and sparkling stream which lay before the mansion. Rosemount was situated in one of the most picturesque counties in Scotland, its possessor being classed among the most fortunate of the county's great men; but the daily labourer who looked with admiration and envy on oriel, arch, and turret, if he had known what was passing within, would scarcely have exchanged his rough straw pallet and "smoky

biggin," his coarse fare and never-ceasing toil, for the soft couch and luxurious chamber of the distracted Baronet. The dying man could not bear to look upon the fair possessions so rapidly gliding from his grasp. He had two sons, and both had been forbidden to come near him. The only person allowed to approach the sick bed was an old servant, who had grown grey in his servitude. The Baronet had led a bad life. His ample means and appliances had been used chiefly to minister to his own gratifications. He had been princely in his hospitality, for the pleasures of the table were his principal occupations in life; liberal to his tenants, for liberality purchased their worship; generous in subscribing to public charities and institutions, for it made his name respectable in the county. But he had been an undutiful son, a faithless husband, a careless father. Yet even with all that he was generally

liked by the county, both by the landed gentlemen and his own tenants.

"Robert," at last said the Baronet to his attendant, in a low voice of horror, "it is coming!"

"What is comin'?" said the matter-of-fact Robert, looking a little uneasy.

"Death!" gasped the terrified sinner.

"Hoot, Sir," said the man, in his rough way, "I've seen you face death afore noo, and look at him bauld enough too."

"Ay, Robert, that was when my blood was up; that's easily done. I could do that yet if I was up and mounted, and had something to fight for and win; but it's ill fighting on a death-bed;" and the old man paused to give way to his despair.

"Weel," said Robert, "there's naething for it but to send for the minister. If he can do nae guid, he can do as little ill. Shall I send for the minister, Sir David?"

The Baronet was sorely perplexed. The minister had been the object of his vulgar and petty persecution. Never was the power of Nemesis more bitterly felt than at the thought of humbling himself before the man he had so unworthily treated. But shame was no match for terror. Robert was commanded to lose no time in sending for the minister.

"Deil, but I'm glad I'm no' to go mysel'," said Robert to himself, for he had taken no small part in Sir David's coarse persecution. "Eh, sirs! Eh, sirs! To think of the Laird ever seekin' favour frae the man he insulted before his ain congregation. God! it's a lang lane that has nae turnin'."

CHAPTER II.

Pray you undo this button.—King Lear.

The minister of the parish was one of the few on whom injuries left little impression, or, if they did, the impression was what he who gave the injury might have envied. At one time, William Russel—such was the clergyman's name—had lost influence and popularity through the wanton malice of Sir David Lockhart; but he had more than regained it by an act which, although to himself it was nothing, yet told on the rude feelings and hearts of his parishioners more powerfully than though he had spoken to them with the tongue of an angel. Cholera was raging in the parish, appalling to the

rich and poor by the daily ravages which it made, for it spared neither mansion-house nor hovel. Sir David gave money liberally —so did every man who was able,—but few ventured to visit the victims of the terrible pestilence save the minister and the doctor. Each did his work according to his calling, and did it well and manfully—the minister ever ready and willing and able to give consolation to the afflicted, the doctor always equally ready, and doing almost as much good by his invincible gaiety and cheerfulness as the minister by his grave and intelligent admonition. Both were equally intrepid in the valley of the shadow of death. The doctor always approved of every word and act of his spiritual coadjutor. The minister had some doubts about the light ways of his friend in the house of suffering; but the latter assured him that cheerfulness had been the best cure he had ever dealt

in; and the minister thought it might be true.

A poor widow had died of the pestilence, and Sunday had been appointed as the day of the funeral. After the forenoon service, some rumours had reached the minister's ears which immediately caused him to set off in the direction of the poor woman's house. About a dozen of the parishioners had assembled outside of the house, where an empty coffin was standing at the door; but the men who had brought it were panic-stricken; they flatly refused to enter the infected tenement to perform their customary duties. The minister said a few words to them with no effect, one of them remarking that *their* lives were as good as *his*, and he might do the work himself if he liked. He took the coffin in his arms, and entered the house of death. He placed the body in its last earthly dwelling, and was heard making the necessary fasten-

ings. In a short time, he re-appeared with the coffin in his arms, and placed it in a cart which had been brought to carry it to the grave. He again entered the wretched cottage to bring out with him a little child, the daughter of the deceased. Leading the poor thing by the hand, he followed the body to the grave, accompanied by his parishioners, now a little ashamed of themselves. After the interment, he took the child home to his family, though all exclaimed against the danger of carrying the infection into his own household; but no one belonging to his family was smitten, and he was afterwards looked up to by all the country round with more respect than the great man who had tried to injure him.

Such was the man who now entered the mansion of Sir David Lockhart. On being shown into the sick chamber, Robert was dismissed, much against his will, for he had

some curiosity to witness the interview; but nothing was ever known of what passed between the clergyman and the Baronet. About an hour afterwards, Russel left the mansion, and he never afterwards willingly spoke of his interview with the dying man.

The Baronet himself hardly spoke again when Robert was recalled to attend him. He attempted to say something about "Walker the writer," his law agent in the neighbouring town of Thriveport, but his meaning could not be made out by Robert. Some thought afterwards that he wished to make his will, but it was too late for that. As it happened, Walker himself was lying dangerously ill of fever, of which he died. The landed proprietor and his agent were carried during the same week to the same mysterious kingdom, to stand their trial in that Court where the distinction of agent and client is unknown.

After the funeral, a search was made for the will, but none was found. The elder son, Sir George Lockhart, succeeded to both estates. The personal or movable property was small, and Percy Lockhart, the younger son, after everything was wound up and settled, found himself worth something less than a thousand pounds.

The brothers were as unlike one another as their father and mother had been. Percy had vehemently taken Lady Lockhart's part when she had been neglected, and more than neglected, by her worthless husband. He had thereby incurred the Baronet's undisguised displeasure. The more cautious George never interfered by word or act; and his prudent conduct had its reward in the broad lands of Rosemount and Glenthorn. He had been bred to the Bar, like many of the landed proprietors' sons in Scotland—no bad training for the duties of a

country gentleman. He was a man of more than average abilities, and of some literary taste; but selfishness and avarice were the commanding elements of his cold and unsocial spirit. His great idea of happiness was the possession of money; even when a child he used to hoard up his pocket-money. Whitsunday and Martinmas were the grand festivals of his youthful years. On these great days, he sat with Sir David, assisting him in receiving and counting the tenants' rents, and in handing them their receipts. Sometimes, when by himself, he had tried how his own name would look at the foot of the important documents. Men thought that, out of his ample means, he would make a handsome provision for his brother; but this did not seem to enter into his thoughts, or, if it did, it had no outward expression—nay, it very soon became apparent that Percy's residence at Rosemount was not agreeable

to the young Laird. The former soon learned what was meant by the steep stairs and the bitter bread of the great poet. A month had hardly elapsed after the death of Sir David, when he discovered that, if he wished not to be turned out of the house, he must leave it of his own accord. On making the discovery, he hesitated not a moment how to act. The few necessaries which he could call his own were easily packed and conveyed to the inn, where the stage-coach passed on its way to Thriveport. He left the house on foot, and walked down the long avenue to the high-road without trusting himself to look back to the house of his boyhood. He had enough to do to keep down something like the *hysterica passio* of poor Lear; but, once beyond the gates, he felt the necessity of self-possession, in so far, at least, as outward composure was concerned. A trial awaited him, too, which he had not

calculated upon. At a turn of the road, he all at once beheld his brother approaching him rapidly on horseback, on the very grey horse which he had been accustomed to ride himself. He had recognized the horse before he knew the rider. There was no way of avoiding a meeting; he hoped his brother would pass on without speaking; but Sir George pulled up, and Percy stood still, feeling, to his own surprise, as calm and composed as if they had dwelt in unity. Sir George's expression of countenance was never pleasant, not even in his happiest moods; and these were when he was receiving money. Even then the happiness was imperfect. He had always the idea that people wanted to take advantage of him, though in what way he could hardly say. It was a general suspicion of human nature, which he carried with him into every situation in life.

Sir George was the first to speak; his tone was as ungracious as his manner.

"May I ask where you are going in such haste?" was his commonplace question.

"To do you a service—a great service," was the ready answer.

"Indeed! I should hardly have thought of that," replied Sir George, with a sneer.

"It is true, however," resumed Percy; "and you must have thought of it. I wonder you have not mentioned it before now."

"I am no reader of riddles," said Sir George, very coldly; "and, though I were, I have at present no inclination for the task. Pray what is this great service? Let me know at once the extent of my obligation."

"To relieve you of my presence at once and for ever. I have left your house, and have no intention of ever entering it again," said Percy, a little more theatrically than

was consistent with good taste; but he was very young, and, as we have said, he was trying to play the part of a man,—he was as yet far from perfect in it.

"Well," said his brother, "you cannot say that I turned you from my door."

"I thought it was as well not to wait for that," returned Percy, turning away, and pursuing his journey.

He thought he had done his part well, poor lad: it was a wretched piece of acting, but the thought of it kept his spirits up.

Sir George felt relieved, but he felt troubled at the same time. He would not like his neighbours to think that he had acted so as to cause his brother to leave his roof. Next to money, he valued reputation, especially where it cost nothing. It was *his* turn to act his part. He was not more successful than Percy had been.

Shortly after arriving at the house, he

took occasion to speak on the subject to old Robert, with whom Percy had been a favourite.

"So, Robert," said Sir George, "my brother Percy has made a very sudden step. He has taken it into his head to leave the old house. I am very much surprised."

"I am no' a bit surprised," said Robert, bluntly. "I wonder he didna gang awa' lang syne."

It would not do. The Baronet threw up his part. He felt he had made a mistake in trying to excuse himself to his servant. So he left his household to talk as they chose, suspecting, however, that their surprise at what had taken place would not be greater than Robert's.

CHAPTER III.

A light heart and a thin pair of breeches go thro' the world, brave boys.—Vulgar Proverb.

Yes, Percy's heart was light, lighter than it had been for many days. The pain of parting from home was over, and the reaction had taken place. His situation of late had been inexpressibly disagreeable. He had seen himself pitied by the very servants. It was high time to be off. But where to go? "The world was all before him where to choose." But big as the world is, its pleasant places are pretty well occupied, and that, too, by people not very willing to make room for new-comers. Every "coin of vantage" is kept with military vigilance.

Pshaw! no man-at-arms ever maintained his post with half the obstinacy with which a thriving man of the world keeps his snug, profitable position. Percy had some vague notion of this in trying to make up his mind where and how to begin life. Ay! look round about you, mile after mile; you may travel ten thousand miles without being a yard nearer the object of your journey. But in looking around him, Percy caught sight of the minister's manse, and thither, without a moment's hesitation, he directed his footsteps. He was kindly received by the minister, who was very soon put in possession of his simple history.

No man ever applied to William Russel in vain, or asked his advice without receiving it in all sincerity and kindness. He heard with sorrow from the young man, how he had felt himself obliged to leave the house of his fathers, but he made no comment on the conduct of

Sir George. He contented himself with asking if he had formed any plan for his future career, and, if so, of what nature. But Percy had formed none. He had hardly expected ever to be obliged to work for his daily bread; and now that this necessity was forced upon him, he felt, young as he still was, how recklessly he had thrown away the last two or three years of his life, in not having devoted himself to those studies without a certain proficiency in which honour and respectability in any profession are not to be obtained.

"You must have thought of some scheme for the future. Speak frankly, and let me know your mind."

"Why, then, to speak frankly," said Percy, "I am a fair draughtsman. I may say, better than the generality of amateurs—at least, so an artist told me; and he advised me strongly to follow painting as a profession. I think it

is the only kind of work which I could follow out with heart and soul."

The minister looked grave and kept silence till Percy again spoke. "You think I have not sufficient abilities for the art. As you said to me, speak frankly."

"I do not question your abilities, for I am no judge; but I understand that this walk of art is crowded with able men—with men of genius. It will be difficult to make your way among them. Even with great abilities, it must take many years of hard study and disappointments. Are you prepared for this?"

"I think so. I have endeavoured with all my power to estimate the difficulties in the way; but they are difficulties which I am willing to encounter, and I cannot say so of those of any other profession."

"Of course you would not think of remaining here to study?"

"Certainly not; I should go at once to London, and put myself under a master. I have as much as, with economy, will suffice for my subsistence for some years, and I must trust to fortune for the rest. I thought of the army for some time, that *genteel* resource for younger brothers; but I am quite sure that if I happened to fall under the command of such superior officers as I have seen and heard of, I could not remain a day in the service."

"I suspect," said Russel, "there are in many callings drawbacks as unpleasant as what you dread in the army. I am not sure that the tyranny you speak of is not of some service to many young men who choose a military life; but I say not this in order to recommend such a life to you."

The subject was long and anxiously discussed. Of course the result was that the

young man followed the bent of his own inclination, as most people do who ask advice. After all, Russel thought it was the best thing he could do. And so it was determined that Percy Lockhart, instead of being proprietor of Glenthorn, should go to London and work, as many a better man was doing at that moment. He made up his mind to sail in a week to London; but he resolved before leaving to indulge in a last stroll through the wild Highlands, among which some of the happiest days of his life had been passed.

So Percy bade the kind minister farewell, and set out on his stroll through the Highlands. He set off in the direction of the hills, the once wild ramparts of a wild race. Even by the road-side there are pleasant objects to be seen at every step. The old ash tree wrestling with the wind, or sunning itself in rustling happiness to the subdued

and sober merriment of a stream; the whaup or the whimbrel raising his shrill cry overhead, as if challenging your incursion into his solitary domain; the golden plover whistles and wheels at wary distance, and the lapwing startles you with the thud of his heavy wing beating the air. Hedges and dykes are fast disappearing, and you enter the solitary glens. There is nothing here for pride, nothing for human passion. It is so still, you can hear your heart beat, and speak in that language which requires not words. How deep the repose of the old glen! You feel that it would be treason against Nature to waken the echoes with an irreverent sound. How glorious the walk over Nature's gorgeous carpet, whose texture no loom can weave, and whose fashion no artist can copy! There is Schehalion shooting his pointed peak among the clouds, and there is Ben Lawers and Ben More. They

seem banded together to bid defiance to the relentless hand of Time. The heather blooms all around; the air is scented with the matchless aroma of a thousand wild flowers, every wind shaking fragrance from an inexhaustible treasury; streams, heather hills, and glorious forests, with their rich solitary glades and rustling whispers. There are some spots far up from "the road," bits of water, small lochs, with the moss growing down to the water-side, with all manner of weeds and wild flowers entangled in endless variety, where the wild duck rears in peace and solitude her wild brood, and keeps her old house undisturbed by rival claimants. Surely, there is more than common gloom over the waste! The red heather has lost its gloss, and the scarlet berries of the mountain ash have become dim. It is only a cloud passing over the sun; but you may mark other clouds mustering on the summits of the surrounding

hills, mounting up piece by piece, and crowding on for the zenith, like a host taking vantage ground on the eve of battle. Some of them are like burnished plates of steel, some have the reflected glow of a furnace, some are dark and vapouring, cold and leaden; but altogether there is a gathering for war which it is impossible to mistake, and Lockhart is to be in the very heart of the strife. There is no possibility of escape. He is caught. Courage, man! you will need it.

The silence is broken by a low, cold, moaning wind, which seems to chill everything it touches; the very rustling of the grass and leaves has changed character—they are shivering now. The trees make a feeble wave with their tiny branches, as if to feel for the coming storm—like the fingers of a blind man groping in danger. The glen is lighted up with a blaze of fire; and for a moment, tree and shrub, and rock and

stream, flash out in dazzling brightness, and as suddenly fall back into their grey and sombre tints. Then comes the crash overhead. The hills are smitten and rent asunder? Not they: they have witnessed ten thousand such storms, and they bear no mark of the thunderbolt. They will witness ten thousand more, when you and I, and all our petty anxieties, are at rest for ever. Again the messenger of fire, and again the deafening crash, taken up by valley after valley, fondled by the mad old hills, as if unwilling to part with the only voice which is mighty enough to shake them into life. There is another sound increasing with the increasing darkness—a dull, solemn pattering above and around, like the movements of a muffled troop, until at last the almost solid rain breaks over you, and you cannot see half-a-dozen yards in any direction. Never mind, keep under the rock and look at the battle.

The rain and the fire are making brave work now. It requires a *man* to enjoy this gear. The rain lashes the hill-side, and passes in angry torrents from its naked ribs. How the thirsty fire licks the wet ground, and darts up the dark ravines, till each appears in a jagged blaze, quivering like a doomed capital in the hour of doom, robed in the burning livery of hell! You envy the badger now in his snug dry chamber. You wonder how every living thing has contrived to find shelter except yourself. Nature provides for her subjects. The hare and the hill-fox, the linnet and the hawk, are all safe under cover. The eagle alone looks from her rock, proud and unappalled, as if in the splendour of a summer's sun. Be of good cheer. The storm is passing away; the sharp, sudden crack of the thunder has been succeeded by a long distant roll.

Yonder dark wall of rain is fast leaving

you, the dripping rain from the rocks is soft and musical, the retreat has begun, and the shadowy legions of the firmament are again on the march.

Among such scenes had the spirit of Percy Lockhart been tempered, and few things are better calculated to set up a man than familiarity with nature in her rough moods. We have known few who have wrestled with the elements who have not acquired fortitude and readiness not often to be found among the mere dwellers in cities.

On setting out for London, a singular whim seized Lockhart. He had, in a manner, been banished from his father's house. He would renounce his father's name, and perhaps make one for himself. In the mean time he assumed that of Warren, which was that of a distant relation of his house by the mother's side. By this name we shall in future designate him.

CHAPTER IV.

Oh! London is a fine town, a very famous city.—Song.

To a mind of any sensitiveness, few incidents are more trying than that of being suddenly thrown for the first time among strangers in a strange place; totally cast off from those supports and counsels which have hitherto been only second to personal energy and decision. The feeling soon wears off, however: the raw, awkward lad from the country enters London with something like terror. Its thieves and swindlers, and murderers and garotters, are all represented as adepts in their several walks of infamy, and as all lying in wait for such valuable prizes as he. By and by Rusticus becomes more knowing.

He walks the Haymarket at night or goes to the Casino with as much confidence as if he were going to his own parish church. There is a great deal of nonsense in your quasi-decent men, who denounce the immoralities of the times. How do they know about them so well? They prowl about Regent Street and Great Portland Street, for no purpose of course, but simply to see what everybody sees, and to study human nature in all its phases; but you do not often find them studying human nature in the dens of the poor and the destitute, or giving them that money which in their other studies they give for lobster salads and champagne. If all the gay streets and saloons were filled with poor, ugly old women in dirt and rags, instead of—their present inhabitants, we have no doubt the study in this way would soon be discontinued.

"Dick," says a respectable City man, with

a wife and half a dozen pledges, "I have never seen what is called life in the West End. You know all about it, so does everybody except me. It looks foolish not to know what all the world knows; will you show me the lions some night?"

"Or the lionesses?" inquires Dick.

"Oh! ah! anything that is to be seen; but of course no immorality."

"Show you what is called life in the West End, and no immorality! I am afraid that will be difficult," said Dick, dryly; "but just as you like; I shall be very happy to show you the lions, as you call them, and if they scratch you it will be your own fault."

And so Paterfamilias goes with his fast friend, Dick Perkins, and sees the saloons and other places of entertainment, merely for the sake of instruction in the ways of the world, and he *glowers* and "thinks his very e'en enriched," and imagines that he commits no

sin,—not he; but I'll bet he'll not tell his wife about his studies. Perhaps he'll subscribe to the Social Evil movement to-morrow. But, if the dangers and seductions of London be exaggerated, its difficulties are real and substantial, as every poor man knows; and yet it is the great resource of poor men. Many seem to believe, with the old saying, "All the streets are paved with gold, and all the ladies pretty." The streets are paved with very hard stones, as many a weary foot has experienced.

CHAPTER V.

A friend in need is a friend indeed.—Proverb.

In London Warren discovered he was not doing much good. Two years passed away; and, in spite of diligent study, he was obliged to confess to himself that his progress was slow. He had heard much of the necessity of studying the great masters abroad; he resolved to go to Italy, to draw inspiration from the works of the great apostles of the art. And so he went to Rome and studied, or fancied he did so, and copied, as he saw others copying; but after six months' work, and hard work too, to do him justice, he found he was not much further on the road to Fame and Fortune than when he

left the dingy metropolis. The masters had drawn their inspiration from Nature, and he would try the experiment. So one fine day he bade adieu to the Eternal City, and set off for the Apennines. He took up his abode in a pleasant little inn in a village at the foot of a range of mountains, making daily excursions in the neighbourhood, filling his portfolio with all kinds of sketches—no doubt thinking he was doing wonders. It was a pleasant life though, sketching during the day and reading in the evening; whatever might be the progress he was making in Art, there is no doubt he was fast making up for lost time in other branches of knowledge.

One evening, on his return from the hills, he observed some little commotion in the place of his abode. On inquiring the cause, he found that a traveller had arrived and asked for an apartment. He appeared to be very unwell; and after two or three hours

had passed, he became rapidly worse. He had been smitten with one of the bad fevers of the country, which was raging at that time. The landlady, terrified for infection, was insisting that her husband should take measures to have the stranger removed. The landlord was a good-hearted fellow, and Warren arrived while he was endeavouring to allay his wife's fears, being unwilling to turn any one from his door who was evidently suffering so much. Warren learned that the stranger was an Englishman. He immediately asked to be shown to his room, on entering which he found himself in presence of a tall, handsome man, beyond the middle age of life, half-sitting, half-reclining on a sofa, evidently suffering under severe bodily distress. Warren briefly explained what had caused his intrusion, offering his services in any way in which they could be available.

The stranger endeavoured to raise himself

to thank him. He stated that he felt so ill that to remove him to any distance would be death; and that if Warren could prevail on the people of the house to let him have a bed-room, it would be the greatest favour that could be conferred on a human being. Warren found that gold could buy up fear, and in a short time the stranger was accommodated with the best room and bed in the house, which Warren at once gave up to him. He set off himself on horseback to the nearest town for a doctor, and succeeded in two hours in returning with one who appeared to be both intelligent and humane. On seeing the patient, the doctor understood at once what was the matter, and wrote a prescription, giving orders for treatment, which Warren promised to see properly carried out. When they left the sick man's chamber, he inquired of the doctor if he apprehended any serious danger.

"There can scarcely be greater danger," was the answer. "Fever of any kind after forty years of age is always dangerous, and this gentleman has been very suddenly and very violently attacked. The chances are much against him."

It indeed appeared so. For many days the stranger was delirious and in imminent danger of his life; but a strong constitution ultimately triumphed over the disease, though it left him so weak as to be hardly able to think. Warren had watched and tended him like a brother. He recovered rapidly, however, and when he understood from the attendants his obligations to Warren, his gratitude was as great as it was embarrassing. He was still weak and confined to bed, and was not allowed to talk much; but by and by, as he gathered strength, he and Warren held long conversations. Warren soon discovered that the stranger's original good

abilities had been highly cultivated, and that his reading had been varied and extensive.

One day Warren had brought his portfolio to the stranger's room, and was amusing himself by looking over its contents.

"Do you paint?" said the invalid, with some appearance of interest.

Warren told him that he was studying painting as a profession.

"Indeed!" said the stranger. "May I see some of your sketches?"

Warren brought the collection to the bedside. The stranger looked at it with great attention. He went over the whole collection, again and again, without saying a word, till Warren became impatient, and made some remark about the sketches not being worth so much attention.

The stranger spoke with alarming frankness. "They are not good," said he; "at

least, the faults in them are fatal to what is good; and I am heartily glad of it. You stare, but I am a painter, and one you have probably heard of. My name is B——," mentioning a celebrated name of the day. "And now I know how to show a gratitude which was actually oppressive to me. I believe you have saved my life, and I believe I can make you a painter. Shall we begin? You are at this moment labouring under as dangerous a disease in painting as I was some time ago in bodily constitution. But I undertake your cure. What say you to my being your physician?"

It was a chance which Warren could not have expected; but he felt that the high favour offered to him was far beyond what his kindness deserved, and he said so.

"You must ask my daughter that when you get home; but as we cannot be there for some time, I shall answer for Florence,—

and she says that nothing I can do in this world will ever repay the service you have done her and me. Well, let me begin the task of repayment;" and he went over the sketches one by one, pointing out such errors and absurdities—these appearing so evident when they were exposed—that Warren knew not very well whether to congratulate himself in meeting with his new acquaintance, or to regret having exposed himself to such merciless criticism.

The painter saw what was passing in his mind. "Come, come," said he; "you have far more sense than to be offended at what is meant for your good. I must cut deep—the disease is deep; but I have said I can cure you, and I will."

Warren in an instant recovered his good humour. "I should be a fool, indeed," said he, "to quarrel with such invaluable assist-

ance;" and from that day a course of study was prescribed to him, and unsparingly enforced, which showed him how he had lost his time in London with one who knew hardly a single step of the ladder to the regions of Art.

In a week, B—— was out of bed, and amusing himself by astonishing Warren with what he could do with pen and ink, with a bit of chalk, with almost anything that could make a mark. He began himself to feel that he was making very different work from what he had been wont to do. Boldness, freedom, delicacy, he was acquiring them all under the bold and delicate hand which now watched over him—mere manipulation was the least of what he now learned. B—— was intimately acquainted with all the famous schools of painting, with their beauties and defects, with their histories and progress. These were all explained and made

evident to Warren, both by words and by hasty but masterly drawings. But the best instruction of all was seeing B—— paint in the open air.

"I must make a little money," said he, "to make up for lost time, and I shall wrest it from the Apennines;" and he was very deeply engaged in making a series of paintings which were afterwards well known in England. He made Warren watch him working from his first sketch to his last finishing touch, induced him to sketch the same subjects from nature, and compare them with his own, until he had no reason to dread that criticism which at first had so galled him. His enthusiasm increased with his hopes.

It is not our intention to trouble the reader with the laborious details of an artist's career. With the assistance of his experienced friend, Warren got through

these with more ease than most of his competitors. In a few years, he was earning a comfortable independence; but he never attained the eminence of his able friend, though he continued long to benefit by his advice. Some years after their return from Italy, he had, with the entire consent of B——, married his daughter, and for three years he was as happy as a man can expect to be in this world. But his wife was suddenly snatched from him, leaving an only and infant daughter; and though he recovered the blow sufficiently to be able to follow out his calling and to attend to his daughter's education, yet he no longer felt the same enthusiasm for his art, though for his daughter's sake he strove to recover, and he did recover, the cheerfulness of a well-balanced and healthy mind. A few years afterwards, B—— followed his daughter to the grave. It was then that Warren thought

of revisiting his long-lost country; for though far from rich, yet, with what his father-in-law had left him, he was independent, and could afford to rest for a time from his labours. His daughter, Florence, grew up even lovelier than her mother, who had almost come up to her father's ideal of female beauty. Warren found that his life was bound up with her, and that life daily grew dearer to him as she continued to bloom before his eyes. But about the age of seventeen some delicacy of health manifested itself, and Warren became alarmed. He consulted an eminent physician, who recommended a total change of air, saying, at the same time, that there was no ground for the slightest apprehension. After various inquiries, a cottage was procured in Scotland whose position in every way met the views of the medical adviser. One thing troubled Warren a little—the cottage was within

thirty miles of Rosemount, and the estuary of the same river that formed the southern boundary of his brother's estate ebbed and flowed within two hundred yards of his new habitation. But there was small chance of his being recognized after so long an absence, and it was not of much consequence if he were. He had long blamed himself for the whim which had made him change his name, but, having done so, he shrunk from the awkwardness of changing it again.

Warren's cottage was beautifully situated within five miles of the town of Thriveport—a grand arm of the sea, about three miles in breadth, spread out before it, with those ever-varying aspects which the changing element alone can exhibit. The shore was of the purest sand, except where, here and there, some large black rocks broke the regularity of the expanse. About two

miles farther up the estuary was the little fishing village of Elletweem, and nothing could be more lively and picturesque than the big-sailed boats of the fishermen on their way to the ocean, or returning with the flood-tide with the fruits of their dangerous toil. The mouth of the estuary, or river, as it was called, was guarded by sand-banks, which rendered access to it difficult without a successful pilot. Seldom a year passed without some melancholy shipwreck and loss of life, for seldom was one of a crew saved whose ship struck on one of these barriers; but the fishermen were bold and experienced seamen, and long periods of time passed over without their meeting with any serious accident. To the eastward of the cottage, and in the direction of the ocean, there was a large piece of wild moorland wholly uncultivated. Not many days after Warren and his daughter took up their

abode in their new domicile, they might be seen galloping across the waste, the horses wild with joy at the touch of the springy turf. The change of air and exercise soon brought back the roses to Florence's cheeks. A few weeks after their arrival, Warren thought he had never seen his daughter look so lovely. It was like a new world to her, not only in so far as mere physical objects were concerned—though those were both striking and delightful—but everything, even very common things, had received a zest and assumed an interest of which she had no previous conception. The walk on the wild moor by the still wilder sea, the flowers which sprung up in lonely, deserted spots, the cry of the wild curlew overhead, even the sudden dart of the rabbit or the hare, as her light footstep intruded on their solitude,—all these were new to her, and as delightful as new. Fresh trains of thought

also began to be developed; she was at the age when the mind begins to inquire into Nature's mysteries and to reason upon Nature's works—to catch glimpses of the grand design of that hand which is recognized on earth by the beauty and the delicacy and the magnificence of its works. The sunshine and the storm, the still small voice of the gentle rain, the living orrery of Heaven, all seemed endowed with new emphasis and expression, speaking in one tongue of one power. And in watching Nature's beauty and Nature's might, she found that her own perceptions and powers were refined and strengthened. Warren was ever ready to simplify and explain, and the knowledge which he displayed in such explanations exhibited him in a new light. She had had little idea of the variety of information which he possessed, for he had waited patiently until his assistance was

asked before he offered it, well knowing that the time would come. He was now as much delighted as his daughter in their new communings, and he spared no pains in storing her mind with that knowledge which both fits it for the duties of this world and prepares it for the next.

CHAPTER VI.

Blow winds and crack your cheeks.—Lear.

The cottage had been built at the extremity of the cultivated ground. Immediately beyond the garden-wall was the beginning of the wild piece of moorland, nearly twelve miles in length, and varying from one to four miles in breadth—one side being bounded by the grand estuary or firth, the other by low, irregularly shaped hills, covered, or mostly covered, by dark pine-trees. Though wild, the moor was, in many places, of exquisite beauty. There were miles of turf of a rich dark-green, which, we suppose, had never been disturbed by cultivation since the Creation; and there were thick patches, or

rather plantations, of whins or gorse through which it was no easy matter to pass, and in which rabbits had multiplied without number. In summer the place was particularly sweet and solitary. A celebrated writer, Sheridan Knowles, declared that he wrote great part of his best productions in one of the sandy *bunkers* in the *links*, as it was called. Wild-flowers of many kinds bloomed around the hillocks by which the ground was broken, the golden bloom of the whins in spring lighted up the dark-green sward, and the sandy shore by which the waste was bounded was like one vast yellow floor, continually washed and polished by the restless action of the tides and waves. In winter the moor was desolate indeed. Many lakes or pieces of water were formed in the hollows, some of considerable extent, to which wild-fowl, especially of the duck kind, constantly resorted; and a sportsman

accustomed to the ground and to the precautions necessary to be observed, could find few places in Scotland where he could make a bag of such variety and beauty.

It was on this moor, on a cold, frosty November day, that Warren had strayed with his gun in search of what might turn up. He had first gone along shore, and, after careful stalking, had succeeded in half filling his bag with golden plover. Those birds are here in flocks of thousands, but they are difficult of approach, and there is little chance of a shot unless the sportsman get within range without being seen. Warren, however, had been more than usually successful; and he turned inland, to see if he could fall in with teal or other ducks, with which the place was said to abound. His search was not successful, however. After a long walk he found himself in a spot which was quite new to

him. Not a living thing was visible except a "string" of wild geese overhead, "clanging" with their peculiar wild music, "ranged in figure," wedging their way and directing their "airy caravan" to some well-known land of promise. It was beginning to get dusk—large flakes of snow were falling, at first in small quantity, but gradually increasing, until there was every appearance of a snow-storm. Warren for the first time felt that he had been guilty of an indiscretion in venturing so far from the landmarks which he knew in so wild and desolate a spot. In the course of ten minutes the change had been wonderful. From being bright and clear, it had become almost dark; the snow was every minute rendering vision more circumscribed. It was fast closing in all round, and he knew well that his chance of finding his way home in any reasonable time was extremely small. Of actual danger

he would not allow himself to admit the possibility; but he felt he might have a struggle to find his way, and he knew he had no time to lose. But what to do? He was on the margin of a pretty large lake, in the midst of which there rose five or six fir-trees and some brushwood on a bit of hillock which rose out of the water, but they had already become very obscure. He had never seen the place before, and had already lost all idea of position and direction, and was as completely at sea as if he had been dropped from the clouds. It was far from pleasant. Though a bold and a strong man, yet neither strength nor spirit could cope with the soft, treacherous enemy which was about to invest him. The ground was rough, and even dangerous in some places; but he thought the snow would afford sufficient light to enable him to choose his footsteps with safety. He resolved upon

discharging his gun, in the hopes of obtaining assistance, and, having done so, a large covey of ducks rose at some distance in the lake, and whistled over his head; but he was too much occupied with his situation to give them his remaining barrel. By and by he imagined he heard something splashing through the water, evidently approaching in his direction, as if from the little island which he had observed in the centre of the lake. It was no illusion. Nearer and nearer, and quite distinct, the sounds became; until, looking with great attention and curiosity, he at last made out the figure of a man, wading very deliberately to the bank where he stood. In a minute more the figure was beside him, with gun- and game-bag like himself. A single glance dispelled any anxiety which he might have had at meeting with so singular and unexpected an apparition.

"That shot of yours has spoiled my sport," said a clear, frank, ringing voice. "I have been watching half an hour for those ducks; they were just drifting within range when your shot took away my chance. I hope you have been more successful." The speaker was a young man and a gentleman. Warren briefly informed him that he was a stranger, and had lost his way, and that he had discharged his fowling-piece as a signal of distress; and," continued he, "though I regret having spoiled your sport, I must say I cannot but think myself most fortunate in meeting with one who I am sure will be charitable enough to direct me how to get out of this wilderness."

"Why," said the young man, "of course any knowledge I have is entirely at your service; but I am somewhat at a loss how to proceed myself."

"You know the country?" asked Warren.

"Every foot of it, from Mussel Bay to Bankhead Cottage; but I question if any one could find his way in this blinding snow."

"I reside at Bankhead Cottage at present," said Warren; and he gave his name.

"And my name is Charteris," said the young man, "and I live in the same direction, or nearly so; but we dare not take anything like the direct road, we should lose ourselves to a certainty. If we could make the sea-shore, our road would then be easy enough, for we could keep the water-mark till we came to your house; but the shore is at a considerable distance from this spot, and—and—upon my word, we are in a kind of a scrape, and not a very pleasant one. In the year 18—, five smugglers were lost in a snow-storm not many miles from this—found dead months after, and they generally knew the country well. I beg your pardon for this sorry kind of encouragement."

"Oh, no," said Warren; "it is much better to have a fair view of our difficulties or danger as it may happen. I know the bewildering nature of a snow-storm well. I was caught in one in a wilder place than this many years ago, and escaped by following the course of a stream which led to an old corn-mill."

"And that reminds me of the stream that runs through this moor—the Heronburn, as it is called; you must have observed it. I shot a teal-drake there to-day; but it is two miles from this spot, and there is not a single landmark that I know. We are still further from the shore, but the ground is more marked, and I think I may find the way. At all events, we cannot stand here. We must try it, and keep rather to the right, if we can manage it, so that, if we fail in making the shore, we may come upon the Heronburn. If the wind were steady, we could guide

ourselves by it; but I think it is blowing from all directions."

"You are quite sure at present where the shore lies?"

"Quite; that's the direction," pointing out the way, "if we can keep it; and the stream is to our right. Well, let us march for it; and allow me to lead the way. If you observe me diverge from the line, tell me immediately."

But who knows when he diverges in a snow-storm? There are few things more bewildering, and especially at night and in a wild, uncultivated country. The snow falls around you like a spotted veil, and folds every object in one unvaried hue. A stumble over a stone—a detour to avoid a bush—is sufficient to make you go off at right angles to your proper line of march; even without those you go wrong inch by inch, until you are actually travelling in the opposite direc-

tion from what you wish to pursue. But Warren and his companion strode on stoutly, exchanging few words, for both felt it was no time to trifle. The storm was increasing, and the blinding flakes whirled around them as if in sport of their troubles. For more than half an hour they continued to walk at as brisk a pace as the broken nature of the ground would admit of. Then the young man stood still and listened. "I can hear nothing," said he; "can you?"

"What do you expect to hear?"

"The sound of the sea. If we had kept the right path, I think we should have heard it by this time."

"I hear nothing," said Warren, "and my hearing is singularly acute."

"Push on, for Heaven's sake!" was the answer. "It is more serious than I thought; but the worst of it is a night's fatigue and exposure. A long night though. It cannot

be six o'clock yet. I cannot tell you how glad I am you fired that lucky shot, for I did not see you. It would be miserable, indeed, to be by oneself in this place, and in such a night."

Warren heartily agreed with him, and again they strode stoutly on, each gaining confidence from the steady, untiring tread of the other. Another half hour—an hour—and yet no sign of the sea-shore. The wind was rising, till by and by it blew half a gale. Already pretty large wreaths had been formed, and more than once they had to toil through those heavy embankments with a good deal of fatigue and loss of time. It was not very dark, but nothing was distinguishable except one dull white expanse all around—one apparently boundless and unvaried sea of snow. Again they stopped and listened, but nothing save the howling of the wind reached their ears. They had missed their

way, that was certain. Though both were well aware of this, neither made the remark. They both knew they had nothing for it but to continue to walk and keep themselves in heat. Warren, as the elder, thought it was his part to encourage his companion, but he had an instinctive knowledge that the bold, frank spirit beside him required no encouragement. Both were men of iron frame, but both began to feel the effects of their violent exertion and of a day's hard work. They agreed to make the walking as easy as possible, and to go before the wind, wherever that might lead to. Their situation was dangerous enough, and they knew it.

Warren suddenly stopped. "What's that to the right?" said he, directing his companion's attention to an object which stood out distinctly. "That must be a landmark at last."

"It is the Witches' Rock," said the young

man, "and we are rather farther from the sea than when we started; but we shall get rest and shelter on the lee side, and there we shall hold a council of war."

It was a large stone or granite rock, standing on the bleak moor, about twelve feet in length, and nearly as high: they both eagerly made for the side which gave them shelter from the wind. There was light enough to see that some bulky object was already lying on the ground close under lee.

"It is a beast," said Warren, in some surprise, for the figure moved at their approach.

"Na, na, it's no' a beast," said a rough, hearty voice; "though what but a beast should be here in sic a nicht. You've lost your way, nae doot—so did I, for as weel as I ken the place; but I fell in wi' the witches' stane here, and just rowed mysel' in my plaid till it clear. There's mony waur places on the muir than this the nicht. Sit

ye doon, sit ye doon, and I 'll share the plaid wi' you; it's a bra' big ane, by guid luck."

"You are a good-hearted fellow, Sam," said the younger of the two.

"Lordsake, Mr. Philip, an' is that you here in a nicht like this! What in a' the earth temptit you here? But I needna ask; you've been after the deuks, like mysel'. But come here in the hollow, an' sit doon, you an' your freend, an' you can hae the plaid between you. I can do weel eneuch withoot it." And he made them sit down in a dry place which had been occupied by himself; but they both refused to do so until he had agreed to take his share of the plaid.

"Aweel," said he, "we 'll be a' the warmer sittin' thegether. But what will the folk be thinkin' at hame? Sir Robert will gae wud wi' fear for you."

"Indeed, Sam, that's now my chief uneasiness; and no doubt this gentleman has

also friends at home who will be alarmed at his absence."

Warren groaned a sorrowful assent, and Philip explained to Sam how they had met by chance at the small lake, inquiring, at the same time, if it was possible to get home that night.

"Hoot ay, I'se warrant it's possible, and likely too. It 's gettin' clearer and clearer, an' I dare say we 'll do weel eneuch, but ye 'll be baith starvin' o' hunger, an' it 's ill striving' wi' hunger an' cauld." Both admitted that they were ravenously hungry, and Sam immediately unbuckled a kind of pouch which he had fastened in some way to his game-bag, and produced a goodly piece of cold beef and bread, saying that he had had his dinner at hame, and that they should eat it up between them.

"You have *not* had your dinner, Sam, and we 'll divide the food, like brother-sportsmen;

and if you don't take your share, I shall take none."

"Nor I," said Warren.

Sam was obliged to acquiesce, and in a very short time the victuals disappeared. "I've seen sumptuous repasts in my day," said Warren, "but that was the sweetest morsel I ever tasted."

"Hoot na, hoot na," said Sam, highly delighted, "that canna be; but I maun say that the air o' the muir this nicht would mak' mony a man no' sae nice as usual. And now," continued he, "here is something else that will no' be amiss in this cauld nicht," and he produced a flask containing about four glasses of whisky. Each took a share without ceremony; "And noo," said Sam, "rest yoursels for ten minutes, and then we maun tak the road, for fear the storm may begin again."

"And how shall we go, Sam?"

"Weel, that's a question," said he, deliberately; "if it wid keep fair there wid be no doubt aboot it; but," after a pause, "we must mak for the sea-side."

"Why, the Heron is much nearer from this point," said Charteris; "and if it snow when we come there, we can get easily to the shore by following its course."

"Very true; but if it should snaw before we come there, deil a landmark is there—it's as flat 's my loof. Noo I think I can mak my way to the sands lat it snaw as it likes, that is, after we're a mile or so on beyont Ailie's thorn; but let's lose nae time, gentlemen," continued he, "for I'm mistaen if it be lang fair."

All sprang quickly to their feet, and Sam, after a keen gaze around him, led the way at a pace which showed his anxiety to get to the landmark he had mentioned, and which kept both Charteris and Warren, though

good pedestrians, at their mettle. "Let me carry one of your guns, gentlemen," said Sam, though the poor fellow had his own to carry.

"Certainly Sam," said Warren, "on condition that I carry yours."

Charteris laughed, and Sam gave a dissatisfied grunt, and continued to lead the way at a good pace. About twenty minutes' walk brought them to a stunted tree or shrub which Sam called Ailie's thorn. "And now," said he, "it may snaw cats and dogs if it like; I could travel the road blindlins." It did snow heavier than ever; and when neither Warren nor Charteris could see a couple of yards before them, Sam continued to pilot the way with little hesitation. Well did he justify the boast he had made by bringing them to the sands which bounded the estuary. "We can afford to draw our breath noo," said he.

"And how on earth did you contrive to keep the right direction?" said Philip, and Warren echoed the question.

"Weel, it was na that difficult. You see, after we cam to the thorn tree, there's a hollow in the ground, aboot twenty or thirty feet broad till within aboot a hundred yards o' high-water mark, and when you are ance in the hollow you have only to tak care you dinna get on the high ground; it needs some care on a nicht like this though, and that's the way I couldna come so fast as you micht hae liket. We'll finish this drap o' stuff then," said Sam, "for we have some lang Scotch miles between us and Bankhead yet; but a bairn couldna tyne the road noo; we have just to keep the water mark."

They had nearly two hours of a toilsome walk, however, for the wind was right a-head, and the sands were soft. All three were

right glad when they came within sight of the light of Warren's dwelling.

He opened the door himself, and showed his companions into a small room, where there was a blazing fire, while he hastily passed on to another door, which he entered, looking much disappointed when he found no one there.

"Why, where is Florence?" said he aloud.

"'Deed, sir, she wadna stay within when you were sae lang o' comin'; she 's aff to hae a look out on the muir for you," said an old Scotch servant, whom they had engaged to assist the English damsel who attended upon them.

"Good God!" exclaimed Warren, "she'll—"

"Hoot, sir; she 's just at the head o' the road frae the back door."

Warren was at the door in a moment. "Florence, Florence!" he called out.

A little soft shriek was heard, and then a

flutter like a bird, and a figure flew rather than walked over the snow, and in a minute Florence was hanging on her father's neck, and loading him with caresses and reproaches, now scolding and now kissing him, till Warren drew her quietly into the room where he had expected to find her at first, when she immediately made him sit down by the fire in his easy chair, and kneeling before him with an elbow on each of his knees, and resting her chin on her hands and looking up in his face, she re-commenced her scolding.

"You wicked, wicked papa! you must promise me, before you rise from that seat, that you will never trust yourself in winter on the moor without me to protect you."

"I met in with a very good protector, Floy,—and there he is waiting to be introduced to you," answered Warren, looking towards the door.

Another little shriek and a spring to her

feet, and a blush, and a little confusion. Philip could not determine whether the shriek, or the spring, or the blush, or the confusion was the prettiest.

"I have been guilty of great impropriety in coming here," said he, "but I thought something had happened. I heard your voice," speaking to Warren, "as I thought, in some agitation, and I—"

"Say no more of it. Allow me to introduce you to my daughter. This is the gentleman," continued he to Florence, "to whom I probably owe my life this day; you must thank him for me."

The confusion was gone, and with a bright, confiding look of gratitude, but without saying a word, she held out her hand to Philip.

"Nay," said Charteris, detaining the hand for a minute, "Mr. Warren does me more than justice; but there is one in the other room who deserves all our thanks, for

without him I believe it would have gone hard with us." He briefly told how they had met Sam, and Sam heard sounds approaching his way.

"What's to be dune, noo, I wonder?" said the unfortunate Sam, bolting up from his chair; "I would face twenty snaw-storms rather than one leddy." But Sam felt himself at home in a moment, when Florence came in to him and took him by the hand, and thanked him so sweetly and so tenderly; but her feelings had been over-wrought; and throwing herself in her father's arms, she burst into tears of joy. Warren had her carried to her own apartment, and she disappeared for the night.

Warren insisted on his guests putting on dry clothes; but Sam on this point was obstinate. "Dry claes afore this roarin' fire, sic nonsense! Beggin' your pardon, I'm as dry as a bane already."

Philip, however, gladly availed himself of Warren's offer, and having hastily partaken of some refreshment, in which Sam had been compelled to join, he intimated his anxiety to be home, where he knew his father would be in great fears for his safety.

"I would have offered to send my servant at once," said Warren; "but he is at the village of Elletweene. Will you have my horse?"

"A thousand thanks; I cannot refuse so good an offer." And Sam having insisted on acting groom in Warren's servant's absence, the horse was brought to the door.

Again thanking Warren heartily, and promising to send over the horse next morning, he sprang into the saddle, and in a few minutes was out of sight.

Sam resisted all entreaties to take Florence's pony, setting off sturdily for home on his feet. There was a rude road which led close to his

cottage, which "naebody could miss wi' a pair o' een in his head, even on a snawy nicht."

Philip's road was much more distant; so Warren saw them both depart without any misgiving.

And who was Sam? His ostensible employment had been that of a miller. His father had left him and his brother a small flour-mill. But Sam, though born and bred to the business, never took kindly to it; indeed, he seemed to entertain a Rip Van Winkleish distaste to all sorts of regular business and profitable industry. From his youth upwards he had entertained a strong and unfortunate taste for all kinds of field sports, and in their pursuit he exercised an unwearied diligence and activity, which, had they been devoted to any profitable calling, would have made him a prosperous man. His brother told him, one day when Sam was

setting out with rod and basket in hand, that he must either make up his mind to give up such amusements, and work as he did, or be content with a much smaller share of the business. Sam at once admitted the justice of the proposed arrangement, and he agreed to take such a share of the profits as his interest in the mill might appear to be worth. His brother was a kind-hearted man, and the agreement was easily made. So Sam retired altogether, nothing loath, from the concern, with a very small income, but which was sufficient for his wants, eked out by the assistance of rod and line. He was known to all the country round as the best fisher who ever threw a fly, and many gentlemen in the neighbourhood took pleasure in having Sam with them in their fishing excursions, his knowledge of the water and the ways of fishing being invaluable. But Sam was no servile attendant on the great. He main-

tained his perfect independence, peremptorily refusing all remuneration for his assistance and advice; and though always civil and respectful to his superiors in rank, he held his position as a brother-sportsman. And thus Sam had imbibed a taste for better society than that more befitting his degree. He had hardly ever known what disease was. Wet and cold made no impression on him. He was like a bit of oak, hardened by the very exposure which destroys inferior plants. His personal appearance was as singular as his character. At the first glance you would have thought him remarkably plain; and at the second you would not have thought him good-looking; but there was a bold, honest, intelligent expression in the whole cast of the features, which surprised the more by the contrast with so rough an exterior. He was a short, thick-set, merry-looking fellow; his face had been burnt and

battered by sun and rain, until it shone in open contempt of all kinds of weather which it might chance to encounter. What the colour of his clothes had originally been, it was impossible to conjecture. They had, by long service and constant exposure to the elements, acquired a kind of neutral tint, hovering between grass, and mud, and straw, and hare-skins, and plovers' feathers, which their constant acquaintance with those various things had, no doubt, produced. His bit of a nose was a ridiculous pretence to that noble feature, having been curled up by frosts and cold winds to a thing of most absurd dimensions and rather suspicious colour. When not speaking, his mouth seemed in constant preparation for whistling; but the expected melody never got utterance. He only laughed with one half of his mouth; the other half retained its musical expression. The eye was as sharp as a hawk's, and the whole

figure was that of a bold, hardy, good-tempered gamekeeper, had he been better dressed. He was not far removed in kind from that functionary, for he was the most notorious poacher in the county. He was scarcely ever out of scrapes, occasioned by his unprincipled attacks on the game of the magnates of the land. Oh, Sam, Sam! prince of Tam Samsons! we wish we were with you at the water-side again!

CHAPTER VII.

In joyous youth what Being has not known
Thought, feeling, taste, harmonious to its own.
CAMPBELL.

SIR ROBERT CHARTERIS was descended from one of the oldest families in the country. He had married a lady nearly his equal in point of descent. Both were intelligent and liberal-minded—liberal in thought and in deed. If a consciousness of high aristocratic birth appeared, it was more in jealously keeping an unsullied name than in any assumption of superiority over their less nobly-descended neighbours. There was no name more respected in the whole country side, or more deservedly so. In politics, Sir Robert was much too moderate for the taste of many of

his neighbours, believing that under the British constitution the general intelligence of the country would compel the adoption of such measures as could be proved to be beneficial irrespective of party; and he could patiently listen to men of the most opposite views, knowing that the truth lay between them, and that between them they would force it out. When politics "ran high," as it is called, those views gave offence to the magnates of the land; and when a formidable band of half-starved weavers and mill-workers walked in procession to obtain some great political object, and it was proposed to read the Riot Act and call out the military to fire upon the mob, Sir Robert expressed his opinion that they should be attacked by bread and beer; and he pledged himself to pay the whole expense if the rioters did not afterwards retire peaceably to their dwellings. The time gradually came round when the mode-

ration he had practised through life became the fashion of the day; and when men of opposite parties could actually dine together and separate without the fear of a single cartel being sent for a difference in political opinion.

One son was the only heir to the family name and honours, and the heads of the house were quite satisfied with their sole representative. We met Philip Charteris in a snow-storm, when there was no time to introduce him to the reader, and our introduction now shall be as short as possible.

He was as distinguished in appearance as his parents, but he had even less of aristocratic assumption; gifted by nature with good abilities, those had received the best cultivation which the country could afford. At the age of twenty-five, though with no pretensions to what is called scholarship, his acquaintance with general literature was

extensive and intimate. Possessed of great bodily strength and animal spirits, he was more than ordinarily fond of field sports, but he cared little for the society of sportsmen in general; and though of a most cheerful and happy disposition, did not show much anxiety to mix with the society of the county.

On the night he left Warren's cottage, Sir Robert and Lady Charteris were alone together in the drawing-room, speculating with some uneasiness on the cause of their son being so late; it was nearly ten o'clock, and he had intimated his intention of being home to dinner at seven. Sir Robert would hardly admit that there was any cause for apprehension; but his frequent applications to his watch, and an occasional glance at the night outside, showed that he was far from being at ease. Lady Charteris became seriously alarmed as the time advanced; knowing that her son had gone to the moor,

she was quite sure that some accident was the cause of his detention.

"I should not like to be foolishly anxious," she said at last, "but do you not think you might send out some of the men to the moor?"

"Why, yes; and if he has missed his way, —which, by the by, I hardly think likely,— they might disperse and fire guns as signals; but if he be all safe, he will not like the story of the fond parents raising the country on his behalf. However, if he do not appear by ten o'clock, I shall go myself, and take the gamekeeper and his assistants with me."

Lady Charteris felt that it would be doubly dreary to be left by herself in uncertainty, but she made no objections; and Sir Robert was just on the point of giving the necessary orders for the expedition, when the object of it appeared. He had ridden hard, and, having given orders for Warren's horse being

carefully attended to, he hastened to relieve the anxiety of his parents. He briefly related how he had been detained, and how Warren had lent him his horse.

"And who is this Mr. Warren?" inquired Sir Robert; "I don't know the name.

"He is evidently a gentleman," answered his son, "and of very prepossessing appearance; but I saw very little of him. I must send over his horse to-morrow morning, and call to thank him afterwards. He saved you some hours of anxiety, my dear father."

"And some trouble," answered Sir Robert; and he mentioned the proposed expedition of himself and his gamekeeper.

Philip reddened a little at the idea of the signal guns. "Why, sir, we should have been the laughing-stock of the whole district."

"Very likely, Philip; and what then? Do you think I was to risk your losing your life for fear of being that terrible thing—a

laughing-stock? Your mother and I were getting very anxious about our precious son."

"Risk of life! Oh, not much risk of that, though I confess I should have liked very well at one time to have heard your signals; but it is quite as well as it is. By the by, what a capital pedestrian Warren is, and he must be twice my age."

"Has he any family, Philip?" inquired Lady Charteris.

"Family? Oh, yes; that is, I only saw one young lady—a daughter, I believe. Yes, I am sure it was a daughter; he introduced me, I recollect."

There were few things which had happened that evening which he recollected better.

"You said the father was a gentleman. Was the daughter a lady?"

"I should say so, most undoubtedly; but

I saw them both for so very short a period, that I can say very little about them. And now I must retire, and get into my own clothes again," said he, glad of an excuse for retreating from an examination which he felt was beginning to become a little awkward. After his departure, both Sir Robert and his lady seemed to be turning over in their minds the narrative of their son, but neither made any remark upon it, save on the extreme peril in which he had been.

Philip sent over the horse next morning, with a note expressing his thanks, and stating that he would have the pleasure of calling in a few days. In the mean time he could hardly help wondering at being so much engrossed by his recent adventure. He found himself continually going over the whole day's occurrences. The meeting with Warren, the walk in the snow, the appa-

rition of Sam, and last, that figure before Warren, looking up in his face, and then the start and the surprise and the introduction. He was almost annoyed at the pertinacity with which the scene kept hold of his thoughts. He tried various schemes of deliverance. He set himself down to read, but he found he was just about as wise at the foot of the page as he had been at the top, so far as the author's subject was concerned. He was a good draughtsman, and he had recourse to his pencil for amusement; but he found himself tracing the outline of one particular figure, only he was so ill pleased with his work, that it was immediately committed to the flames. He was so distressed with himself, that he snatched up his hat and made for the open air, without any other object than what accident might furnish.

Accident furnished Robert Hay, youngest

son of a country gentleman, whose estate marched with that of Sir Robert Charteris. The young man carried a gun, and was attended by a water-spaniel. He called to ask Philip to accompany him to the moor. But Philip was not in the vein, and excused himself on the plea of an engagement.

"Well," said Hay, "I am disappointed; it is just the day you like, and I thought I was quite sure of your company; besides, I had a bit of news with which I intended to interest you. I have made a discovery worth all your collection of natural curiosities and fossils, and what not; but I think I shall preserve it for myself,—that is, I would, but I want some information, which perhaps you may furnish me with. Do you know, Philip, who lives at Bankhead Cottage—the cottage near the beach, you know?"

Philip was rather alarmed at the effect the question, so very simple a one, produced

upon him. It was with some effort that he answered, in what he meant to be an indifferent tone, "that it was a gentleman of the name of Warren."

"Ay, Philip, but there is a lady as well as a gentleman! By heavens, Charteris, the loveliest girl I ever saw! I caught a glimpse of her on horseback some days ago, along with the gentleman who, I suppose, is her father. I never saw anything so beautiful. Pshaw! beautiful is not the word,—it is impossible to describe her; and she rides so well: they took the rail at the Low Milton as well as you or I could do,—only, Philip, neither you nor I will ever do it so gracefully as this unknown enchantress; she flew over it like some glorious wild bird, and her horse seemed to be actually mad with pride of his burden. I say, Charteris, do you know anything about them? I am dying to know."

"You have been dying several times of similar curiosity," answered Philip, not caring to come to particulars; "but your recovery has never been very doubtful, even in the worst cases, and I shall answer for it in this."

"Oh, Philip, do tell me, if you know. I want an introduction. They would be great acquisitions to our dull society here—begging your pardon, and Sir Robert's and Lady Charteris's. I did not mean anything that way, you know."

Philip did not at all relish the conversation, and especially did he altogether disapprove of the undisguised enthusiasm of young Hay, whom, for the first time, he looked upon with feelings of no great favour. But he informed him of his adventure, and that he had seen and spoken with the inhabitants of the cottage.

"Could anything be more fortunate?"

exclaimed Hay. "Philip, you must introduce me. When, Philip? When and how will you manage it?"

But nothing was farther from Philip's intention, and he said so at once. He observed, that he himself was next to a total stranger, and that to introduce any one was quite out of the question.

"Very well," cried the enthusiastic young man, "I shall manage it some way or other. In the mean time, I'm off for the ducks, and the wild-goose chase afterwards, Philip. Here, Splash, come in to heel," cried he to the spaniel; and he and the dog disappeared.

"I never thought that young fellow was such a puppy," muttered Philip to himself, feeling very much annoyed at the undisguised admiration which the young man exhibited for Florence Warren. The conversation quickened the design which he

had entertained for a day or two of calling at the cottage. He re-entered the house to make some alterations in his attire, which he seemed to judge necessary for the occasion, ordering his groom to have his horse in readiness in half an hour.

The snow had almost disappeared, and he struck across the country on a fiery chestnut, which no one else cared for riding, except Tom, the groom. By the time he arrived at the cottage, however, the fire was pretty well subdued. When Tom took the bridle from his master's hand, the horse was quite resigned to be led quietly about for a time.

Warren was at home, and in a few minutes joined Philip Charteris in a small library, into which he had been shown. After the usual commonplaces and salutations had passed, their recent adventure became the subject of conversation. That being exhausted, Philip began to wonder if he was

to see the enchantress whom young Hay was so disagreeably enthusiastic about. At last he summoned up courage to ask if he might pay his respects to Miss Warren. Warren at once, though with no great appearance of cordiality, assented. He led the way to the drawing-room in front of the house, which commanded a fine view of the river and distant ocean. It was a good-sized apartment, elegantly furnished, and Florence appeared very naturally as the presiding genius of the place. She received her visitor with perfect ease and composure. Philip could not help drawing comparison between the elegant, but evidently unstudied manners and conversation of the lovely being before him and those of some of his fair country neighbours, not at all in favour of the latter. Florence Warren was above the common size of women. She had that wavy, undulating kind of movement, which gives

such an idea of elasticity and spirit. The very dark brown hair was the richest Philip had ever beheld, rolling down in clusters over her shoulders, independent of all rules of fashion; a mouth of pearls, and the slightest possible dimple in the chin; a colour, which we will not insult by comparing to that of any flower in the field, or garden either; a form of perfect symmetry, rounded in the choicest mould of beauty,—these Philip looked upon, and at once confessed that he had never in his life seen anything so fascinating, and at the same time, so natural and unstudied. An hour flew on wings which must have belonged to that wild bird which Hay raved about—at least, so it flew with Philip—but Tom, the groom, thought it about the longest in his life, for his master's calls of this kind were wont to be of the very shortest duration. At last, Philip was obliged to take his departure. After

expressing a hope that he might have the pleasure of introducing Sir Robert and his mother to their acquaintance, he joined the impatient Tom, and rode slowly home.

Warren did not like it, and he rather thought Florence did. He saw how matters were likely to turn out. Charteris's admiration of Florence was hardly disguised, though she seemed wholly unconscious of it; but this would not continue long, and then the question was, what her feelings might be, and the consequences thereof. He was aware of the high position of Sir Robert Charteris. He had not the least doubt that a great alliance for his son must be the chief wish of his heart. As long as he remained unknown, he could not think that his daughter would be looked upon as a suitable match for the best blood in the country, and to reveal himself was contrary to the deter-

mination of a whole life. But was he not raising up bugbears which never might happen? No; he felt they were too likely to happen, and he began to wish he had chosen some other spot than Bankhead Cottage. It was not too late to retreat, however, and he felt that safety would be best attained by flight. He would sound Florence on the subject before determining how to act.

Their departed visitor was the theme of a few common remarks, and then Florence dropped the subject, and did not recur to it, or seem in the least to retain any recollection of the visit.

A few days afterwards they were sitting alone, when Warren thought he would try the ground again.

"Do you not feel dull in this solitary place?" he began.

"Never, sir," was the ready response. "I

never liked any place so well—it is not at all solitary."

"Well, in summer it is beautiful, certainly; but would you not prefer being in London at this season?"

"Oh, papa! would you compare a London winter to this?—the smoky atmosphere, the dreadful streets, the more dreadful fogs, to the pure air and brilliant snow, and grand river? It makes me shudder to think of London. And would you really prefer the dull manége nonsense of the parks to a gallop across the moor or along the sands? Besides, I am waiting to see the opening of spring in the country. I have never seen it, you know, and I am convinced it must be the finest of all Nature's displays. I have all my flower triumphs arranged already; you could not think of depriving me of them? You cruel, tyrannical father!"

"Nay, I was only putting a case," said

Warren, very quietly; "it was merely on your own account I was solicitous. The air is very keen here, and your health—"

"Was never so good as at present." And she certainly looked the truth of what she said.

"Well," persisted Warren, "there are very few young ladies who would like this extreme solitude."

"Because there are not many young ladies who have so charming a papa, to make solitude charming."

"Ah! I forgot that."

"And, besides, is there not that tall, distinguished-looking Mr. Charteris, who threatens to break in upon our solitude?"

Warren thought the charming papa ran some risk of being supplanted by the tall, distinguished-looking Mr. Charteris; but it was evident that the thought had not entered into Florence's head, or she would not have spoken so freely.

"By the by," continued Florence, "I am not sure that we should allow this gentleman to disturb our solitude. We have been so happy that I doubt if we should risk any change."

Warren cordially joined in the doubt; but he only said, "We can hardly shut the door in his face after the service he rendered to me."

"Very true," said Florence, resignedly, and the conversation dropped. Warren resolved to allow things to take their course, at least for a short time. He was perhaps rearing up dangers which might never exist; but it is no wonder that, left in the world with only one pearl of surpassing price, he should make it the business of his life to watch over and preserve it.

Philip, though it struck him that Warren's reception of him was not very cordial, continued to call at the Cottage from time to time.

He could not resist the temptation of seeing the bright vision which had so unexpectedly crossed his path. He was not what is called in love. He had not yet got beyond admiration—the eye had been at once subdued, and the judgment had followed in captivity; for after two or three visits Philip had been at no loss to discover that the mind was worthy of the casket which contained it. She seemed so very unconscious of her superiority in every way, and was so devotedly fond of her father, that she never appeared to be thinking of herself. His admiration was great, and love could not fail to follow; but love, properly so called, is a plant of slow growth, and depends on many attributes and qualities which do not appear on first acquaintance. Many a man has mistaken admiration for love, and married, and found out his mistake when it was too late. And no more fatal mistake can be

committed; but Philip was not quite so far advanced yet, though he was travelling on the road, and he knew it. There was nothing like display in Florence; but more than once, when Warren and Philip had become engaged on some literary topic, the former had appealed to Florence for some information or quotation, and she had shown an acquaintance with general literature which Philip had never seen possessed by any lady except his mother. But not a stitch of the blue-stocking was allowed to appear. She rarely joined in such subjects, except when appealed to, and that was not of very frequent occurrence. By and by Warren began to like the society of the young man, whose character and tastes were so congenial to his own. There was no mistaking the nobility of his nature or the strong mind which tenanted that powerful frame. His visits to the Cottage had a good deal changed the previous economy of its

inhabitants. Philip joined them in their rides, and in many a wild gallop across the moors he experienced sensations of excitement and delight of which hitherto he had not thought he was susceptible. Even when the excitement was over, and he appealed to Philip sober, he felt almost alarmed at finding himself so wholly engrossed by one dominant idea. And how did Florence feel? She was heart free. It would be idle to say that she felt no pleasure in Philip's society. She did not attempt to conceal it; but her father had hitherto so completely engrossed every affection of her nature, and he appeared so worthy of the monopoly, that the idea of dividing it never entered into her mind as even a possibility. It was a delicious life to those three. The spring was opening with more than usual beauty; the wild heath gave forth its aromatic treasures, and the whins were one sea of golden bloom. The

sea in the distance was dotted with the fishermen's boats, and the wild curlew overhead, keeping his wary distance from all earthly dangers, screamed down to the reckless riding party, as if sympathizing with beings who so evidently enjoyed, as he did, the grand freedom of the wilderness. As the spring advanced, Philip accompanied Warren to all the fishing streams in the neighbourhood. The handsome Englishman, as he was thought, was soon as well known by the miller, and the blacksmith, and the turnpike keeper, and the owner of the ferry-boat, as Philip himself. And so a friendship was struck up between them which seemed to promise a rapid ripening; and the ripening of friendship is the most pleasant stage of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

Young Hay exhausted his ingenuity in endeavouring to obtain an introduction to the inmates of the cottage, but in vain. They visited nowhere. Philip Charteris was the only visitor who was received. This, of course, did not escape observation, even in so solitary a spot, for Philip was one of the first young men in the county both in point of rank and abilities, and Robert Hay had stimulated curiosity by the description which he had given both of Warren and his daughter. He made no scruple of avowing his own enthusiastic admiration of the latter —an avowal not very pleasant to his female acquaintances; but Bob was known to be a very general and not a very constant admirer,

and his devotion was regarded as no great proof of the beauty or merit of its object. But Philip Charteris had never been known to bestow any particular attention upon any of his fair neighbours; nay, it was rather thought that he shunned female society. When it was heard that he was a frequent visitor at the Cottage, and when it was also reported that he had been seen more than once riding with the father and daughter, it is not to be wondered at that both he and the Warrens became the subject of many curious speculations. No one who had seen Warren doubted that he was a gentleman. Still no one knew the fact, and idle and evil tongues indulged as usual in all manner of conjectures: Sir Robert Charteris and his lady could not avoid hearing them, and they might be forgiven if they became a little solicitous about their son's intimacy with the strangers. It is true he never concealed

from them a single visit which he made; on the contrary, he generally contrived to make them aware of those visits; but when questioned on the point, he could give no information either as to Warren's worldly circumstances or rank in society. He had not the slightest excuse for inquiring into particulars, and Warren had never indicated the least inclination to communicate them. Philip had intimated to him his father's wish to be introduced to him and to make his acquaintance; but Warren had with every mark of respect declined this, explaining that the chief object of his daughter and himself in coming to that part of the country was to live in perfect seclusion for a time. "There 's no one in the country," he said, "more worthy of respect than Sir Robert Charteris, or whose acquaintance is more desirable. I hope you will convey to him my high estimation of his kindness; but at present I really cannot

avail myself of it." It was a matter which Philip of course could not press, and he dropped it at once. Sir Robert was a little surprised, but far too high-minded to be hurt at his overtures being rejected. "Well, Philip," was his only remark, "you are the only person fortunate enough to obtain access to this Prospero and Miranda. It is a pity your name was not Ferdinand." Philip felt a little confused at the allusion, but Sir Robert showed no inclination to push it any farther, and no curiosity to ascertain his sentiments about the strangers. He resolved to show no solicitude on the subject, and the son felt the delicacy of his father's conduct, and resolved that he should be worthy of it. But as yet he had nothing to communicate. It is true that the more he saw of Florence, and the more he understood that frank, noble nature,—so devoid of artifice, so open and true in act and expression,—the more did

his admiration increase; in fact, he was fast passing the boundaries of admiration. He felt that he was no longer an independent being, who could rely on his own resources for the happiness of life; he was captive in the hands of the stranger, bound hand and foot by the most powerful enchantment which rules over human feeling. He had no wish to break the spell. He was not one of those love-sick youths who think that such a spell could not be broken, but he felt that the fracture would destroy the freshest and strongest shoots in the tree of life, or at least he thought so. Such shoots are often destroyed, and in some natures grow again vigorously as ever; but Philip had never before experienced the feeling which now agitated him, and he could not conceive the possibility of it being experienced more than once. If Florence was lost, love was lost. Ay! it was love now, strong and

passionate, but so respectful that the more he became entangled the more reserved did he appear. He felt that he had not been rash in fixing his affections upon a stranger of whom he knew nothing. There are some natures so frank and transparent that you cannot be deceived in them. They are like the diamond whose lustre cannot be simulated. Such a jewel was Florence.

And the more he knew of Warren the more did his misgivings disappear. It was impossible that such a man could be other than a gentleman and a man of honour; and in after days both Sir Robert and his mother agreed with him. So, in the mean time, all solicitude about the rank and birth of the strangers disappeared.

We must take leave of the Cottage for a while, to introduce other and very different characters.

CHAPTER IX.

Thriveport, at the beginning of our story, was, and it continues to be, a large, prosperous manufacturing town, in which all the good and evil of a manufacturing population are exhibited in busy and constant exercise. In the course of thirty or forty years, wealth had accomplished one of its wonderful transformations. Men and manners, streets and houses, customs and observances, all were so changed that a new town seemed to have been built for a new race of beings; the grand objects of this race being, as is usually the case, to forget and to cause others to forget the degrees by which they

had arrived at their present prosperity, and to acquire as rapidly as possible those habits and characteristics which are supposed to belong to what are respectfully termed the upper classes. Wealth can do much, but it cannot, in the homely language of the proverb, very quickly make "a silk purse out of a sow's ear," though the inhabitants of Thriveport seemed determined to give the lie to the well-known adage; and certainly, if zeal and ambition could have succeeded, they would have attained their object. The slow, sober, grave-looking, and homely-clad merchant or trader of the not very olden time had disappeared, and in his place was seen the rather well-got-up though not very tastefully-dressed speculator of the modern time. There were as many carriages rattling along the streets, bearing merchants and manufacturers and their honest-looking silken wives and daughters, as there had in

former times been carts transporting the goods of their thrifty ancestors. The maid-servants, instead of tramping along in their "short gowns" and blue flannel petticoats, with bare arms, and, sooth to say, bare legs and feet, tripped along in the smartest of caps and whitest of stockings. The older burghers appeared hardly at home in frock-coats, boots, and strapped-down trowsers; the younger inhabitants, with coarse shooting-jackets and small ivory-headed canes, were bold without being easy, and confident without being self-possessed. The ladies followed the newest fashions; but amidst all this bravery there seemed to exist an uneasy consciousness of some cardinal deficiency, especially if some well-born county dame appeared in street, or church, or theatre. Roast beef and pudding, sherry and port, were wont to be the luxuries and extravagancies of a feast. The son of a weaver

or a tobacconist will now entertain you with turtle, champagne, and all the delicacies of the season, turning up his nose if the wine be ropy, as contemptuously as a City Alderman; and why not, if he pay, and can afford to pay, for his dainties?

CHAPTER X.

Pride or ambition often puts men upon doing the meanest things; so climbing is performed in the same posture as creeping.—SWIFT.

Things ill got have ever bad success.—SHAKSPEARE.

WALTER DAVIDSON was one of the great men of the borough. He had been deservedly promoted to the managership of the Thriveport Bank, and he had managed it well. It must be admitted that his promotion had been owing, in no small degree, to the circumstance of his having married the sister of one of the Bank directors; and it may be presumed that the relationship had been no small inducement to the marriage, for the lady's personal attractions were not great, and she was one of those devout people who

believe that the less they enjoy themselves in this world the greater is their chance of happiness in the next. If this was the case, her chance of celestial beatitude was great. But Davidson himself was a man of grave, if not gloomy, disposition. His wife's austerity, if not absolutely pleasant, was not disagreeable. They had no family, and the want did not seem to be regretted by either of them. The only thing like strong affection which Davidson had ever experienced was his attachment to a brother, as unlike himself as two of the great family of mankind could be to one another. The brother, James Davidson, was as open and kind-hearted a being as ever breathed, but, at the same time, as reckless and thoughtless as his brother was provident and considerate. But his talents were more than respectable; in a provincial town they were thought wonderful. He had a tolerable knowledge of many subjects which the most

of his townsmen were entirely ignorant of, and he got credit for more than twice the amount he possessed. Such as he was, Walter liked and was proud of him, and James returned his affection. If he did not admire his brother for his tastes or information, he respected him for his position, and for the respect in which he was held by others. Shortly after Walter's promotion to the managership, or cashiership, as it is termed in Scotland, of the Bank, James entered into a line of business which appeared more than usually promising. Walter was induced, partly by his affection for his brother and partly by the expectation of large profits, to help him; or, in other words, he became a partner. This was, however, a matter of secret agreement, for it was a rule of the Bank that none of its functionaries should carry on any kind of business or enter into speculations on their own account. The

thing went on for two or three years apparently well enough. Walter received annually a fair allowance in name of profits, taking it for granted that the business was in a favourable state. Rumours, however, reached him now and then that James was not very attentive to his business; nay, that he was idle and dissipated. By and by, instead of receiving any sum in the shape of profit, he was applied to for loans on one ground or another, which were never repaid, and he became thoroughly alarmed when, instead of receiving back a thousand pounds which James had solemnly promised to repay in eight days, he was applied to for a larger loan, without any promise of repayment at all. He refused, on the true ground that he had not the money; nay, he told James that, if he did not receive back what he had already advanced, he was a ruined man; and he demanded a true statement

of the affairs. Upon an investigation, it appeared that James was "far below the world"—at least twenty thousand pounds. Walter saw himself on the brink of a precipice from which there was no retreat. Behind him was a debt which could not be met; before him was certain ruin. Justly enraged at the position in which he had been so cruelly placed, he reproached his brother bitterly for his deceit and his cruelty, knowing, as he well did, the fearful consequences of an exposure. James attempted no excuse; he admitted, to the fullest extent, his culpability, and told his brother that nothing he could say was equal to the tortures inflicted by his own heart.

"But what can I do?" he exclaimed. "I cannot go on for many days without a large sum. Bankruptcy to myself would be a relief and a blessing; but to you I know it is worse than ruin—it is dishonour."

"It is death!" exclaimed Walter; "and it shall he death before dishonour."

"You do not mean—?"

"I mean what I say; but there is no use talking. Although the partnership could be concealed, I cannot repay the sum which I have bor—*stolen* from the bank, and sooner or later that sum must be accounted for. Ay," said he, "Thriveport will have something to talk about: James Davidson, the bankrupt, and Walter Davidson, the bankrupt and felon. God! can it be true?" And he uttered a roar like a caged lion.

James wept like a child.

"Come, come, sir, this is no time for child's play; tears cannot wash out shame. I suppose the partnership cannot be concealed?"

"The books will show it," was the answer.

"They must not show it, James Davidson; you understand me?"

James was silent; he did understand him.

"Yes, James Davidson, if you had merely ruined *me*, merely taken from me every farthing I possessed, you would have been welcome to it, and you know it. I have been a hard man to the world; I have refused to all men both my money and my heart, and I gave you both. I shall be repaid by being declared a felon. There is only one chance left—your books must be destroyed."

"And how shall I appear before my creditors?"

"And how shall I appear before a criminal court?—and who has brought me to this? Hark ye, James Davidson; you must leave the country. *I* cannot do it,—a single day's absence might reveal my deficit to the Bank, —or I would flee this night; but there is no time for a start."

"And not much time for me," answered James; "there is fifteen hundred pounds due in two days. I cannot get off in that time. I have thought of flight before."

"And when is the next payment due?"

"In ten days after."

It was dreadful; every step became more difficult and more dangerous; but the possibility of saving himself from exposure and ruin having entered into Walter Davidson's head, he determined to risk all to accomplish it. He thought nothing of the sacrifice of his brother; he would willingly have fled himself to the uttermost ends of the earth, and taken up his staff as a beggar for life; but he could not flee. Flight was immediate exposure, and escape was impossible. The sweat dropped from his head in his agony. "James," he at last said, "you must give me this last chance. I shall give you money to meet the first payment and

for the expenses of your journey, and—you will give me these books."

James then rose slowly up. "Meet me here to-morrow at this hour. If no other way can be devised, I will do this thing. You need not mistrust me—I shall be here at the appointed time. But leave me now, leave me now, sir," he said, fiercely, and Walter gave way before raising the storm.

He strode into the street, wondering at the difference of its appearance since he had left it to enter his brother's door, or rather wondering at the new light in which he saw things now—things of the smallest interest and importance. The humble apothecary behind his counter, whom he had before hardly thought worth his notice, how he envied that quiet, composed, mean-looking man now! The apothecary? Pshaw! there was not a shivering wretch on the street

who was not an object of envy to him. It was now that he felt the drawback of having a good character—he had so much to lose. He envied the broken-down, disreputable blackguards of the town, as a man who has a terrible ordeal to go through envies those who have passed through it. They had undergone the operation, and the torture was over. They had recovered, however damaged, but he had yet to undergo it, and he knew not the result.

With a man going on from good to good, or from good to better, his past conduct is the becoming background of his improving position. With one suddenly convicted of crime, the past "beauty of his life" only makes a contrast with the present hideous aspect. And the world is indignant at having been taken in with false appearances, at having been cheated out of its respect and approbation, and revenges itself by visiting the

cheat with a double portion of persecution and contempt. Walter Davidson wondered if there were any other man in his own rank of life bearing such a load of care as he did, and staggering with such suffering beneath it. How he longed for some great common calamity, to make all men equal, and bring them within the orbit of his own misery; for some unheard-of convulsion, to reduce civilized habits and usages to confusion and ruin! When the body is afflicted with more pain than it can bear, it takes refuge in insensibility; when the mind is overcharged, it finds relief in madness; but Davidson felt that he could not afford to go mad. He must act, and act prudently. He had a difficult and dangerous game to play, and he had to play it with that fevered pulse and that throbbing brain. Though feeling as if stunned by his misery, he knew it would not do to indulge in vain grief; he must put

off remorse for a time, and meet it at a more convenient season.

His plans were laid and his resolution taken, but he felt the greatest difficulty he would have to contend with was himself—to walk as if he bore no burden, to look as if he knew no fear, to act and speak as if not spell-bound by that crime to conceal which demanded the very opposite conduct from what it caused. Crime was new to him; he was a novice in the trade. He and his brother had entered into a new partnership, and their stock in trade was pillage and lies. He might have said, with Macbeth—

> My strange and self-abuse
> Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:
> We are yet but young in deed.

His mind was made up, though he never hesitated an instant as to what he would do. His great anxiety was the chance of something interfering with the execution of his

project. He might be taken ill and be confined to the house, for he felt that his present sufferings must affect his bodily health, then his deficit would be discovered, and ruin and shame would be the speedy and certain consequences. How often had he appeared at meetings of creditors, and taunted the bankrupt with extravagance and dishonesty, with tampering with honest men's property! He had been the dread of every insolvent debtor connected with the Thriveport Bank. How gladly would he now have exchanged positions with any bankrupt that had appeared in the borough!—how gladly disappear for ever from the scenes of his past influence and respectability! But such thoughts were of no use. He must make a great effort to regain his self-possession. Necessity compelled him to assume outward calmness, when he could have gnashed his teeth and torn his hair with the rage of a wild beast.

Hours passed, and Walter Davidson might have been seen walking home, suffering, indeed, what only a strong and a naturally honest mind can suffer, but apparently calm and composed. The fire still raged within, but not a spark appeared to show the conflagration. We shall not attempt to describe how he passed the night,—the sudden wakening and the momentary struggle to recollect what was the cause of the oppression on his soul, the choking gulp of agony which recollection extorted,—the morning sun appeared, that pitiless light which summons the guilty before the world, and blazes in all the fierceness of an accuser. He rose up to meet it as he best might. He would fight it out to the last. He went to the bank as usual, going through his duties with a calmness which astonished himself; but he felt that in any question of the least intricacy he had to call upon himself to raise his

energies—he had to awaken himself from his misery to the business of the hour. That over, he sank back again, to go over, for the thousandth time, the whole history which pressed upon his brain. What was the last chapter to be? He must meet his brother at night; and again he put forth his hand to take what did not belong to him. He felt that it would be better to have it severed from his body; but it was far too late to make the sacrifice for any useful purpose. He was already compromised to an extent which rendered honesty and safety incompatible. There was no choice. Night came slowly on, and with the darkness he again took the way to James Davidson's counting-house. James was there. Walter placed the money before him, which his brother betrayed no eagerness to receive. It was the price of his character for life.

A knock at the door! What a start, what

a throb of the heart of both! Yet it was nothing: a boy passing had idly given the blow with a stick, but the idle sound had the tongue of a witness. Guilt is a ready interpreter.

James was the first to assume outward composure. Danger had strengthened the weaker man while it almost unnerved the other. But disease tells most on the iron frame and the iron mind,—there is so much to take hold of; and crime, while it shakes the once stern and upright man like a reed, merely makes a little more flexible what was never difficult to bend.

"Sit down, Walter, and let us have our last conference out. I have ruined you—not willingly, but recklessly. You are ruining me wilfully, to save yourself. It appears to me our accounts are nearly balanced. What say you?"

Walter replied by a bitter laugh.

James looked very grave. Walter could

hardly have conceived that countenance capable of such deep expression. It had the command of him.

James continued:—"I wish to place matters in their true light before parting for ever, and the truth is, we are both equally guilty. If there is any difference, you are the greater criminal of the two. I borrowed and lost your money; you stole that of the bank. Men would decide against you there in comparing our deeds; you now again steal from the bank, and I, knowing of the theft, take what you have stolen. The law in this case, I believe, holds us equally guilty. I can yet save myself by declining to take the money, and by declaring myself bankrupt. In a few months I would be a free man. But I know that to you the consequences would be terrible; and I have made up my mind to sacrifice myself for your sake. Only I must have matters square

between us before I go. Acknowledge that I have stated the thing fairly, and then we proceed to business."

"I acknowledge it," said Walter; "proceed."

"Then," said James, pointing to a large parcel, "there are my books, containing a true record of all my transactions. By fleeing the country, and leaving those books in your power, I destroy all chance of ever again holding up my head in society. So again, and for the last time, I say, it appears to me that our accounts are nearly balanced. I shall retire the bill due to-morrow, and then you must play your game by yourself as you best may."

James rose slowly from his seat, and, approaching Walter, held out his hand.

"Brother, farewell," said he.

"Brother, farewell," was the answer.

And they parted for ever.

CHAPTER XI.

Sorrow concealed, like an oven stopped,
Doth burn the heart to cinders where it is.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Walter heard the receding footsteps of the only being he had ever loved, he felt he was more lovable than ever. He had been his destroyer, and the thought hardened his heart to play his desperate game. It must be played quickly though,—there was little time to lose. He required another victim. Well; if he had sacrificed his own brother, would he hesitate where a stranger was concerned? He must go on, or he had destroyed his brother in vain. He must at once put aside all considerations of the crime he was committing—as a crime, and look

upon it as a simple act of self-preservation. The crime had already been committed. If he paused now, he had sinned in vain, suffered the torments of hell in vain. He was acting under compulsion. His crimes were the consequences of others' crimes. He felt that if he could have foreseen his brother's delinquencies, he would not have hesitated a moment in keeping the honest course, that it would have been the greatest of human blessings to have done so; but *now* it was idle to speculate upon impossibilities. The victim—the other victim whom he required! Well; was he not himself the greatest victim? The next would be an innocent man, and have the reward of innocence in his own heart. What would he not give to have the weight removed from his! Let the world perish, he would play out the game!

The thing was easily done. He frequently,

in the course of business, visited the counter of his money-clerk or teller, Richard Chalmers, looking at the various operations of the day. The clerk had sometimes occasion to write at another desk behind him, in which case his back was turned to the money-drawer. On one of these occasions he found no difficulty in possessing himself of a bundle of notes which he knew to be valuable, and in quietly walking off with them to his own room. He lost no time in taking down the bundle and distributing the notes in his safe so as to form a correct balance of his cash. It was the only moment of happiness he had experienced for a long time. He could now look at those piles of treasure with tranquillity and pride. There was no flaw now for some suspicious director to discover and to expose and ruin him. He was safe beyond detection. The deed was done, "the initiate fear" had fled. For

an instant he felt something like the calmness of innocence. He at least possessed its counterfeit, and none but himself could tell the deceit.

His composure was shortlived; he felt that it would be unnatural that it should live. Still there was a flattering exultation making successful war against his own conscience. There was one great fact which stoutly held him up against remorse. He was safe—safe by the only act which could have made him so.

The victims! One was provided for should he ever re-appear: he had parted with the only proofs which could make him formidable; the other had still to be disposed of. The second act of the tragedy had to be played within a few hours.

Walter Davidson sat in his own room, waiting until the clerk, Richard Chalmers, should discover the deficiency in his cash.

The discovery was as certain as that the next hour should strike. He stole a glance through a small window in his room at his still unconscious victim. The business of the day was nearly at a close, and Chalmers was taking a quiet look at the newspaper, preparatory to balancing his cash at the usual hour,—perhaps reading the trial of some unfortunate man for embezzlement and breach of trust, and inwardly congratulating himself on his own respectable position—perhaps speculating upon the time when he himself might be manager of the bank, and still more respectable. Had he known the present manager's feelings he could hardly have wished to change with him. But he knew not those more than he knew what his own position was to be in half an hour.

Clang! One—two—three! and the hour had struck, and the bank was closed to customers for the day. There was business

though for those within—for two of them, at at least. The manager had to play out his hazardous game. It was the last hand, and he held winning cards.

The bank was very quiet, the noise of the street was shut out, and what on ordinary occasions was felt as a relief, appeared now as an unnatural cessation of the day's labour —a pause before a panic. To Davidson the petty management of a bank had assumed the importance of the world's direction. Chalmers's evident unconsciousness of danger, compared with his own complete enlightenment, almost irritated him. But this would not last long. For Chalmers was busy at his cash-book. He had not discovered his loss yet. He was calmly counting his notes, and arranging them into bundles of twenties, and hundreds, and thousands,—jotting down the contents of large parcels containing many of those bundles tied up together. At last the arrange-

ment was complete, and he compared his jottings with the balance in his book, and appeared a little surprised—only a little. He had made a mistake. The sum deficient was so large, it must be a mistake. He examined his jottings carefully, and the surprise did not diminish. He had hastily recourse to his parcels of notes again, taking them all down again and examining them carefully. Ay! Davidson knew it was working now. The second victim was beginning to know his danger. He would know it better by and by: the jottings were all right; the notes had been correctly counted; there was a deficiency of five thousand pounds! Chalmers could hear his heart beat. We shall not describe the agony of the next half hour; how he racked his brain, endeavouring to discover how the money had disappeared. He knew he had not given away such a sum to any one

customer, and he could not account for such an exact deficiency. Davidson felt as much as his victim. He could not bear to look at the latter in his evident distress, and he set himself down to write, or pretend to write, for his hand shook, and the blood tingled in his face and ears. Writing was out of the question: he could not go away, for it was the custom of Chalmers to come to him before four o'clock with his cash-book, and deliver over the money on hand, to be locked up in the bank's safe. It was upon the stroke of four. The hour struck, and he could sit no longer quiet.

"Chalmers, be so good as to bring your books and cash," said he, as quietly as he could; "I am going home."

Chalmers walked quickly to the room, and stood before him with a face so ghastly and full of despair, that Davidson had some excuse for appearing startled.

"Good heavens! Chalmers, what has happened? You are very pale! Are you unwell?" Davidson was as sick at heart as poor Chalmers.

"There is a dreadful error in the cash, sir!" answered Chalmers. "I'm five thousand pounds short!"

"Nonsense," exclaimed the manager; "there is some mistake. You must have made an error in your additions, or counted your money wrong."

"No, sir; I have gone over everything again and again, and there is just the exact deficiency I have told you."

"Give me your book," said the manager; and he pretended to examine it very anxiously. He was anxious enough. Of course he found that Chalmers had stated the truth.

"Chalmers," said he, after a long pause, "I have no doubt of your honesty."

"God bless you, sir!" burst from the miserable lad. The blessing went through the manager's heart like a curse. But he compelled himself to go on.

"You must have paid away the money to some one and omitted to enter it. I have made such a mistake myself." The manager was beginning to collect himself and play his game with skill. The first shock was over. He would go through it now.

"No, sir!" answered Chalmers. "I paid away no such sum to-day, and I have examined all my vouchers."

"Then you must have paid it away with some other sum. If an honest man has got the money he will return it." He could hardly get out the words; but Chalmers attributed his agitation, naturally enough, to the loss itself.

"That's the only hope, sir. Pray God an honest man has got it!" Another dagger

through the manager's heart; but he continued to play his game very well—he would not suffer all this torture for nothing."

"I have told you," continued he, "I have every confidence in your honesty. Should this sum never turn up, I give you my word to report favourably, most favourably, to the Directors. And I hope they will take the same view of the matter as I do."

"And if they do not?"

"Let us hope the best!" And the manager actually managed to glide before and hide his guilty self, and believe for a moment that he was acting kindly to the poor boy whose destruction he had so successfully planned. At last they parted, and each was left to his own thoughts. We know not whose was the more bitter. But the manager was safe.

CHAPTER XII.

Beware the first false step.—Bulwer.

Richard Chalmers was descended of very humble parents; but it was early observed that his intelligence and abilities were much superior to those of his companions of his own age. His abilities gained him a bursary at the Grammar School of Thriveport, where he received the rudiments of a good education. The rector of the school was of opinion that he was well calculated to make more than a common figure in life; he accordingly interested himself in procuring for Dick a situation in an attorney's office, where he would have an opportunity of learning the law and of making his way in the world. Old

Samuel Walker took him as an apprentice, and was much pleased with the way in which he performed his duties. He had not been with him above a couple of years, when he could draw any deed required in Scotch conveyancing, and his handwriting was a very model of ease and legal elegance. But the law was uphill work with a lad without interest or connexion. Walker, who was agent for the Thriveport Bank, got Chalmers into a situation there, which enabled him at once to support himself and his widowed mother, with the almost certain chance of rapid promotion. The promotion was rapid. The old teller died, and Chalmers, after some hesitation about his youth, was chosen to fill his place, which he did with ease and credit to himself, and to the entire satisfaction of the manager of the bank, Walter Davidson. But Dick, unfortunately, was fond of company, and com-

pany was fond of him, and he was oftener at the tavern than his employers would have approved of had they known it. There were no public amusements, and young men —ay, and old men, too—liked the leisure which Falstaff liked better than home and instructive reading. But the tavern-door is too often the road to ruin. "Per me si va tra la perduta gente."

It was the ill fortune of Dick Chalmers to fall in with bad and pleasant company at the tavern which he generally patronized. Two good-looking, middle-aged men took up their abode at the "Cross Keys." They drank freely, and conversed on many subjects with ease and ability. They were especially fond of what they called a quiet game at cards. They seemed to prefer this even to good drink and pleasant conversation. In an evil hour Chalmers was induced to join in the game, and though he had

never played before, he made a little money. Both strangers insisted that he must either have known the game, or that he was the sharpest hand they had ever met with. As Dick had never played, he was compelled to believe himself the gifted individual they said he was. But the gift was not permanent. Instead of improving with practice, he seemed rather to fall off in his play; certain it is, he lost his money, until he was minus a considerable sum,—all, in fact, that he had been able to save from his salary. Dick was no fool, and he began to think he was not quite so sharp as his new friends thought him. By and by he was convinced that he had been the victim of sharpers; for after having cleared him and others out of all they were likely to get, and having heard sundry rumours not at all complimentary to their mode of play, they quietly took leave one day. It seemed to be a rule with these

gentlemen to do everything quietly: a quiet game, a quiet dinner, a quiet bottle of wine, and a quiet talk.

Chalmers had been foolish, but he also had been honest. He had ceased to play the moment he had lost his all. The sharpers had offered him unlimited credit, but Dick saw the hook, and would not take the bait. He abjured cards for ever.

It was much about this time that the loss in the Bank's cash took place. Of course no trace of it could be discovered, and it behoved the directors of the bank should be made acquainted with the circumstance. Davidson did what he could, with safety to himself, to save his victim; but the directors took a bad view of the case, and they were irritated at the loss in a year when their losses had already been considerable. Some of them had heard that Chalmers was a young man of habits inconsistent with the position which

he held, and insisted upon a criminal information. Old Walker, the agent for the Bank, refused to lay it, and, after angry words with the directors, threw up the agency. It was even the worse for poor Dick. The directors nominated as their agent a person who had no scruples about doing the dirtiest work of his profession. Indeed, Mr. Luke Sharp seemed born for dirty work: the dirtier it was, he appeared to like it the better. He was the son of a greedy old farmer in the neighbourhood, who, it was understood, had grown rich by the necessities of his landlord—advancing him sums of money in loan, and receiving for these both security and cheap farms. Two of his sons were already provided comfortably with the best farms on the estate, and the third son, Luke, he destined to be educated in the law of his country, and devoted to the practice thereof. Luke took

kindly to the law. His chief delight was in those parts of it where cunning and unscrupulous practices unfortunately sometimes got the better of high principles and honourable agency. It was in his nature to grovel in the dirt, like those searchers in the great metropolitan sewers, who wade among the filth of a city for lost trinkets and silver spoons. He prospered, however, when other and better men went to the wall; and worldly prosperity in Thriveport, as in other places, is among prosperous men the great and general test of respectability. So Luke Sharp was employed to get up the case against poor Chalmers. Luke pointed out the whole history of Dick's tavern-goings, his unfortunate quiet games with the London gentlemen, his having been heard to say he was a ruined man, &c. In a word, he made it appear that the thoughtless young man was a drunkard and a gambler. An in-

formation was laid before the Lord Advocate, and Richard Chalmers was committed for trial.

The day arrived when James Davidson's bill fell due. Of course it was dishonoured, and James was not to be found. The drawer of the bill naturally applied to Walter for information; he had none to give. He seemed a little surprised and a little troubled, but recovered himself immediately, and quietly stated that his brother had told him he was to be from home for a few days; he must have been detained from some unavoidable cause, or he might have mistaken the day the bill was due. He, Walter Davidson, had no reason whatever for suspecting that his brother could not meet his just debts; on the contrary, he believed him to be in good, if not in affluent circumstances. He regretted much the irregularity with regard to the bill, but had no doubt his brother would

appear in a day or two, perhaps in an hour or two, and put everything in order.

"Then," said the holder of the bill, "if you are so satisfied of your brother's circumstances, have you any objection to give me your guarantee that it will be paid? In that case I shall be perfectly satisfied, and shall let the bill lie over for a few days,—as long as you like."

Walter paused for a little. "I don't know that I would have any objection to what you ask, but my engagements with the bank prevent me from entering into any transaction of the kind. I am bound to incur no such responsibilities."

"Your word will satisfy me; say that you will see me paid, and I shall let the bill lie over just as if I had your guarantee."

"I consider giving my word just the same as signing my name," replied the manager; "and of course I should be breaking my pledge

to the bank,—that I shall not do while I pretend to be an honest man. You may take what steps you please. I have already stated my conviction—at least my opinion—that my brother has been detained by some accident, and that he will appear, probably, in the course of the day: that his affairs are all right, I have no cause to doubt; but for the reason I have mentioned, I must decline all responsibility."

This was all plausible enough, if not quite satisfactory to the anxious creditor; and so he waited a day or two for James Davidson's appearance, but waited in vain.

Walter had entered the troubled waters. He now felt himself fully committed to carry out his frightful and difficult game. He had to wade through lies at every step. He himself was a living lie in appearing and acting to the world as an honest man. He had to speak lies, and look lies, and make

lies consistent with one another. It was dangerous and difficult, but he did it well. It was not when acting that he felt any difficulty, it was in studying his part; and that was day and night, sleeping and waking. It was very soon known that James Davidson was bankrupt, and that he had destroyed or carried off his books. Walter was glad that the thing was known at last. He had not now to wait and watch for the news, not knowing how or when it would reach him. It was a relief to him to have a substantial cause for appearing dejected. It was one task, and a harassing one, off his mind, not to be obliged to appear cheerful and composed. The disgrace of his brother's flight was sufficient to account for the depression to which he now gave way, and it was almost a luxury to be able to give way to it without exciting suspicion. With the great majority of the directors of the bank

he was still in as high favour as ever, but there was one man among them who had for some time borne him no goodwill, on account of Davidson's having withstood some application for a money accommodation inconsistent with the regulations of the bank. This man thought he had now a chance of "feeding fat his ancient grudge," and, at the same time, appearing to be doing no more than his duty. At one of the ordinary meetings of the directors, he took occasion to make some remarks on James Davidson's bankruptcy, and to advert strongly to the great amount of bad paper which was lying in the bank. He also alluded to the recent defalcation of Chalmers, remarking that they, the directors, were there in a most responsible position, and that it was impossible for them to be too careful in their supervision of those in their employ. He went on to state that he, along with his brother directors, had every confi-

dence in their manager's honour and integrity —no man doubted these; but they were, in their position, bound to take nothing for granted from any one in their service, especially in cases where they had an opportunity of examining for themselves. He would come at once to the point. During all the time Mr. Davidson had been manager of the bank,—and he, for one, would say that he had managed it well,—his cash had never been examined. God forbid that he should, for a moment, doubt its being correct! but, in looking at the statement before him that day, he saw the large sum of forty thousand pounds said to be on hand in the safe of the bank. That it was there he had no doubt, but he thought it was incumbent on them, as directors for others, to make sure of the fact; and he moved that the money in the manager's possession should be examined, and the result stated in their minute of the day's proceedings.

Few things could have pleased Davidson more. How narrowly had he escaped destruction! If this had come upon him a few weeks before, he would have been exposed and ruined. But he appeared deeply hurt. He made a manly and affecting speech,—alluded to the grief and humiliation caused by his brother's unfortunate misconduct, he would not hesitate to term it—misconduct worthy of the highest reprobation, and for which he would not attempt to frame an excuse, but with which he felt it was needless to assure the directors that he had no concern, further than the misfortune of being related by blood to a dishonest man. What grieved him next to that was, to see, by the motion now made, that the taint had reached him,—that his brother's misconduct had been the cause of his losing their confidence. Of course, he was in their hands, and must submit to any

examination they chose, however unprecedented.

The malignant director thought he had him on the hip. Davidson appeared profoundly dejected. It was, to him, the happiest moment he had experienced for months.

One of the directors, an old friend of Davidson's, indignantly opposed the motion; but another, who was no enemy, justly observed, that the thing having now been brought forward, he thought it was for the manager's own honour that the proposed investigation should be made, and with that view, and that alone, he would second the motion, which was then unanimously agreed to; for more than one had observed Davidson's apparent discomfiture, and had taken alarm. It does not take much, at times, to make the best man in the world to be suspected as a knave, and Davidson was

not among the best. He deliberately produced the keys of the safe, and two of the directors were appointed to examine the cash. They found it all right, to a penny, and the manager's character stood higher than ever. He followed up his advantage by proposing, that since this investigation had been deemed necessary, the necessity would continue to exist; he would, therefore, in future, at every weekly meeting, hand over the cash to be counted by the directors. The directors did not think this was required; but the manager was peremptory, and declared that if it was not done, he must cease to have the honour of serving them. He would not lie under the suspicion of any one for any consideration the world could offer; "and," concluded he, more cheerfully, "where suspicion can be so easily avoided, it would be absurd in me to run the risk of incurring it. I must confess I did

feel hurt at the motion at first, but I now think it was a most proper and necessary one. It is a great improvement in the discipline of the bank, and I beg to tender the mover my sincere thanks."

He was playing it well. He almost deceived himself at the moment. He felt something like the glow of an honest mind. Not one there, not even he who made the motion, retained the slightest suspicion of Walter Davidson being other than what he had always appeared to be—a sternly upright, honest man.

The proceedings of the meeting, of course, "got wind," and were soon known by the mercantile community of Thriveport. The opinion of the manager as a man of business and a man of honour, was, if possible, higher than ever.

And thus is the game of life played. There are not many men like Davidson, who rob a

bank and retain an honest name, but there are many whose feelings and secret actions are as much at variance with their outward professions and ostensible character as his. Is there a man alive, who, if his whole secret thoughts and wishes were known to the world, would not die for shame?

"Let a man examine himself" when he is passing judgment upon some detected sinner, —take a fair view of what he knows himself to be, and what he appears to the world to be—and then, if he is satisfied with the scrutiny, let him cast that stone which the accusers of one of the guiltiest in their tribe dared not raise from the ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sir, I will pronounce your sentence.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

God and our innocency defend and guard us.

KING RICHARD III.

THE blow had fallen heavily on Chalmers's widowed mother. Her son and her son's character were her fortune in this world, and she was contented with it. On his apprehension, she had immediately applied for permission to visit him, which was readily granted. She was one of the few remaining stern Covenanters of the olden time, little given to display of feeling or affection, and, fond and proud as she was of her son, repressing the justifiable expression of maternal pride and affection which most mothers

indulge in. "Richard was well enough," she said, on hearing him well spoken of; "but, in the common course of nature, he had a long course to travel yet: it was time enough to commend any poor mortal when he had finished the work given him to do in this world." But while the stern old woman spoke in this way, the last thing that would have occurred to her would have been the disgrace or ruin of her son. When the news of the calamity was communicated to her, it was for an instant only that the possibility of his guilt entered into her mind. She dismissed it at once and for ever. She walked to the jail with her usual stately step, as firm and assured as though the evil tidings had never reached her,—hiding her face from none, and choosing the most public path to her destination. But when she was ushered into the presence of poor Dick, in his wretched cell, and saw the way in which

the law treats those whom it presumes to be innocent until they are found guilty, her firmness forsook her, and the paroxysm of grief which shook her frame showed the nature of those feelings whose expression she had hitherto restrained. Dick thought it was her belief in his guilt which had overcome her, and he sat quiet and sullen. At last he said, somewhat reproachfully,—

"Mother, I did not think you would have believed me guilty of being a thief!"

"Believe it," she exclaimed, "I would hardly believe it, though you said it yourself!" And she embraced her son with a sudden burst of affection, which her long habits of self-restraint could not prevent her giving way to.

"It is God's will," she said; "and it must be borne, if it be His will. I trust you shall be cleared in the eyes of man as you are in His. If not, we must bear our burden as He thinks

fit to impose it on us. It will be good for us in the end. But I'm glad your father is dead, Dick; and that is a word I never thought to say in this world."

"Thank you, mother; as long as you believe I am innocent—and I am as innocent as yourself—I can stand up against the opinion of the world; but as to the villain who has done this thing, may God—"

"Hush, my bairn! leave him in the hands of God, who knows how to deal with him without your sinful telling. But tell me all about this dreadful business, and what we are to do to get justice, if it is to be got in this world."

So Dick told his mother the whole circumstances, so far as he knew: he also told the gambling story, and how it was likely to weigh against him. This was the sorest trial of all to the old woman; but she knew that this was not a time for indulging in resent-

ment against what she knew had been so fearfully punished, and she made no remark.

"I know what you think, mother," said Dick, as she kept silence. "I know it was wrong of me to gamble for any sum, however small; but the punishment is like to be equal to the offence."

"It is done, my son, and cannot be undone, and if it 's repented of, I have nothing to say; but it will give a fearful handle to your persecutors."

"Ay, trust Luke Sharp for that!" said Dick, bitterly; "but Mr. Walker has been here, God bless him! and he believes me innocent, and has sent to retain one of the best advocates at the Bar in my defence, and young Mr. Percy Lockhart has offered to pay the expense; but Mr. Walker would not hear of that. So you see my case is not desperate. The best of it is that both Mr. Walker and Mr. Lockhart believe me inno-

cent, and that's the only comfort I have had in all my trouble," said the poor lad, with a ray of something like cheerfulness in his eyes.

And a great Scotch advocate defended Dick, with an eloquence which in such cases was never surpassed in human pleading. He contended that the very largeness of the sum proved the impossibility of the money having been lost at play. The previous habit of gambling had been alleged against Chalmers. "Was it likely, was it possible that any one in a respectable position in life would, without many previous gradations of vice, all at once play for such enormous stakes as would account for the deficit? Had the sum been ten or twenty, or even fifty pounds, the thing might have been believed; but he dared to say there never was an instance where a young man in the position of his client had all at once, without some long

previous hardening process, risked such sums as those alleged to have been lost by him at play." He concluded a brilliant pleading by the following words:—"There is a felon somewhere, perhaps not far off, though veiled in the mean time from your eyes and mine,—safe for the present from human pursuit and human justice, but more wretched in his successful villainy than my client in that ignominious place. It has long been my vocation to appear, as I do at present, to defend those whom the law accuses of crime, and I have often been puzzled to know whether I have been defending the guilty or the innocent, the knave or the honest man. In such cases I have ever confined myself to my strict duty as an advocate, and dealt only with the evidence before the Court; but in the case before you, I have never felt the slightest doubt in my own mind as to my client's innocence. For that

client I have raised my voice as an advocate, for that man I shall raise it as a brother; and I declare it to be my conviction that he is as innocent of the crime laid to his charge as any of the gentlemen I have the honour to address." He sat down and stole a glance at Davidson. His face expressed deep interest,—nay, it wore a kind of exulting smile, as if rejoicing in the power of the argument he had heard. "If that be acting," said the counsel to himself, "it is the best I have ever seen!" It was partly acting, partly real anxiety that his victim should escape. But this was not to be.

Davidson had spoken highly in Dick's favour,—so highly and earnestly, that Dick's counsel had a suspicion of the truth; but he did not feel himself justified in trying to cast suspicion where it would be so difficult to fix guilt, and the attempt might injure his case.

Poor Dick's eye had glistened at the

unexpected declaration of his counsel, and he bowed to him in deep and grateful acknowledgment of the generous testimony he had borne in his favour; but it was of little use. The Judge had taken up an unfavourable view of the case, and charged decidedly against Dick. He concluded a charge of great ingenuity with a few words, which destroyed the impression the speech of counsel had made in Dick's favour.

"Had the unfortunate young man at the bar," he said, "brought into Court an unstained name,—had he been able to bring forward his past character and conduct in proud and honest denial of the present charge,—why, I might have been shaken in the view which is forced upon me by the evidence before the Court; but he comes here, and it is most painful for me to say it, as a dissipated man and a gambler, as a gambler with cheats and ruffians who have

absconded, and hidden themselves with their spoil in their secret dens of infamy—whose very touch was pollution, whose society was ruin and disgrace. I had no wish to press this upon you, gentlemen,—I did not intend to do so; but it has pleased the learned counsel who so eloquently addressed you to speak of his client in terms which I hardly think consistent with the evidence before you; and I have thought it my duty to mention to you what has been proved to be fact. It is facts you are to be guided by, and not by the conviction of the most eloquent man that ever breathed."

And so neither Davidson's testimony nor counsel's eloquence saved poor Chalmers. He was found guilty, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.

The poor widow had wished to accompany her son to Edinburgh, and sit by him at this trial; but Dick had objected.

"I must bear it like a man, mother, if it come to the worst, and I know I could not do that if you were beside me; you must go home, and pray to Him who can send me home to comfort you!"

But he never saw her again. Percy Lockhart, who had heard of the case from Walker, had taken a deep interest in it. After the trial, he called on the old woman, and insisted on supplying her with the means of comfort, so far as her bodily wants were concerned. The conviction which he expressed of her son's innocence was far dearer to the poor widow than the riches of the Indies would have been; and it was this which made her pride stoop to accept that assistance which otherwise she would have refused. But the stern old woman was smitten to the dust by the loss of the only treasure she had possessed in this world after her husband's death. Refusing all sympathy, she pined in her

solitude till her old heart was broken, and within three weeks of her son's trial she was carried to that narrow house where all sorrows in this world are at an end.

Davidson heard of her death, and was glad that her grief was over. But he felt he could not look forward to such a termination of his sufferings, with that hope and assurance which had brightened the last hours of the widow's life. She had mercy and forgiveness to look for. He had justice and judgment. "God help him!" He, too, had proffered assistance to Dick's mother after the trial, but it had been sharply refused, without even thanks. "Ay," said he to himself, "she suspects the truth!"—and he was glad she was dead.

The temptation to steal, to cheat, for the mere purpose of acquiring wealth, is not very great. It requires no grand amount of principle to abstain from taking what is

not a man's own. Many men of no very high character could be safely trusted with untold gold. They are the coarsest of the human family who could violate such a trust, unless previously vitiated by crime, or stimulated by some strong passion. It is otherwise when character, and rank, and position are involved. Many a man can endure poverty manfully, and disdain all dishonest ways of improving his condition, who would shrink from the censure of the world, and who, to avoid that censure, would condescend to do those very acts which, if known to the world, would by it be most censured.

Walter Davidson could have lost every farthing he had in the world without experiencing the slightest wish to retrieve his fortunes by unworthy means. He would have died rather than employ them. It is no great praise; but his character was dearer than life to him. Money can be lost and

regained; character once lost is lost for ever—a broken mirror. Poverty leaves no lasting stain; the brand of dishonour is ineffaceable. And, to save his character in the eyes of the world, Davidson had sacrificed an innocent man and a brother, and polluted his hands with filth which cannot be washed away! He was a branded felon before God, but the world saw not the ignominious mark. It had scared his inmost soul, but no visible sign betrayed its existence; and thus do many men walk through the world—self-branded and self-tortured, with the outward semblance of happiness and contentment. Life is hardly worth so much. But Davidson had yet to learn its value. Like most men, he had fearfully overrated it.

Walter was unsuspected and James was condemned as a fraudulent bankrupt and a felon. He had agreed to bear his brother's burden, and the agreement had doubled it,

for Walter was not lightened by James bearing an equal weight. Thus both men staggered through the world; the one self-punished for the crime the world knew not of, the other denounced by the world for the crime he had not committed. After a time James Davidson felt that he had done far more for a brother than brotherhood requires. It had been done under strong excitement, and now the revulsion took place. He had assumed Cain's mark, not for killing, but for saving his brother. He might return and tell all,—but who would believe him? He had wilfully given away his own honest name, and destroyed all the evidence which might restore it. His books were gone—who would believe the cause of their disappearance? Ay! he had made a fatal, an unheard-of sacrifice, and for whom?—for one who was living in honour by his dishonour. Had there ever been such a fool as he?—fool and

knave, for he had enabled his brother to play his guilty game. He had read the trial of poor Chalmers, and was at no loss to guess the truth. It was bitterness all. Himself sacrificed — Chalmers sacrificed: two innocent men reprobated by the world as thieves, to save the real thief from reprobation; nay, to erect the thief into an honest man. It was like to drive him mad, the terrific injustice of the whole thing; and all caused by his own inconceivable folly—so inconceivable that no fool would believe it.

He escaped all pursuit. There was not much search made. But he continued through life to be his own detective. He was in the cruel custody of his own pitiless reflections.

CHAPTER XIV.

An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart:
Oh, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

A very great loss is the loss of hope, but I struggle on as I can.—JOHNSON.

AND so Walter Davidson was safe—safe from the wrath and contempt of the great world of Thriveport. He had paid dear for his safety though, and so had others. Theodore Hook held that "wrong never comes right." Walter Davidson felt that it could not. "Farewell the tranquil mind!"—ay, farewell for ever! Two were already drinking the bitter cup which he had filled for them. His own draught would be deeper still and

more bitter. He knew that. He had never deceived himself for a moment with the hope that with safety he was to acquire peace and comfort, but his crime had brought graver consequences than he had anticipated. Having entertained little doubt of Chalmers being acquitted, his condemnation, and the despair and agony of his old mother, came upon him with the stunning force of a new and unexpected blow. It shook him to his inmost soul, and he almost gave in. The man knew in his heart of hearts that, even at this late hour, he would be happier for life if he confessed all and did justice to him he had so foully wronged; he knew that every word of his confession would carry its balm with it, and purge his bosom "of that perilous stuff" which was a burden "too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven." He knew well that by concealment he was doubling his crime and his sufferings; that Chalmers's

punishment was his damnation. But he had not the strength to tell the truth. He wished to do it, but he felt he *could not*. Were the thing to do again indeed, and with his present experience!—But this was idle. Few men would sin if they knew the punishment beforehand of sin even in this world. Davidson had sacrificed his brother—borne false witness against Chalmers, and destroyed him; he had stolen his employers' treasure. Fratricide—homicide—perjurer—thief!—he felt he was no less. The brother's, the widow's, and the orphan's curses were upon him. A heavy burden, and he knew it would never be less; he must work under it—think under it—sleep under it—die under it. It was one burning spot—unquenchable. He knew that he must face God with his guilt, but he could not make up his mind to face the directors of the bank, and acknowledge the evil he had done.

His wife died. It was a relief. She had suspected that something was wrong. She knew there was, and she had guessed pretty near the truth. How did she know? He had perhaps spoken in his sleep, if sleep it could be called. Be that as it might, she had one day introduced the subject of Chalmers's trial and banishment, and remarked that she thought it possible the wrong man had been banished.

"I think so too," was Davidson's calm reply; and his wife was puzzled.

CHAPTER XV.

A storm at sea, and an Elletweem fishing-boat lost.

It blew a strong gale of westerly wind, which increased with the making of the tide. Fourteen fishing-boats had left Elletweem early in the morning, for the deep-sea fishing, and their return was anxiously looked for by the inhabitants of the village. The sea was the fate of their crews, for weal or for woe. They could almost all read the signs of the weather, and calculate upon them with something almost like certainty, and act accordingly, but no one had foreseen the present gale. It was within an hour and a half of high water. The storm had not yet burst. The elements are pausing on the eve of

an engagement; but they pause not long. There is a rustle on the water; the wind is whispering mischief to its great ally, which trembles with pleasure at the well-known voice. The whisper is rising into loud and angry parley. The tempest charges like a squadron in battle; the waves are tossing about their white heads like madmen in delirium, reeling and staggering like drunkards wrestling with despair. The mirror of the waters is broken into millions of fragments, gleaming occasionally in a hurried ray of the sun, as the clouds for an instant are torn before his face, and he looks through the rent at the battle. The dance goes on with increasing fury. Those old madmen never tire while the music lasts, and the wind is still piping with unabated vigour, now beating down for a moment with a sudden blast the wild billows, now shooting them up and around the old cliffs,

as if to hurl them from their seats. It takes a grasp like an armed man, and roars in the premature exultation of victory; but it will not do. The breakers hurl at their foundations, and the blast tears their bare scalps; but the old guard will not give way. The storm has spent its fury; the attacks on the ramparts are becoming feebler and less frequent. What a hissing as the waves are dashed back from the impregnable adamant into the boiling cauldron! But the surge is lowering its crest, the blast is subdued to sulky and fitful growls. He who gave it liberty has chained it up, and bid "the waters and the winds be still." The unfortunate fishermen were caught in this storm, and many a heart quailed at the increasing blast. About a mile below the village there stand the ruins of an old castle, or irregular fortification. Under lee of those ruins were collected the friends and relations of those who were at

sea in the boats. Many others were also there, attracted by curiosity or sympathy. Every eye was turned towards the bar of the river, which was about four or five miles to the eastward.

"A sail on the bar!" exclaimed a preventive service man, who had been anxiously watching with his telescope, and who had been often appealed to by the anxious crowd. "I can scarcely make her out for the spray;" but he continued to look, while all present waited for his words with indescribable anxiety. "I see her now; it's David Norrie's boat; I know her by the new cloth in her foresail. It is the only sail set, and it is close reefed. I've lost her again,—she's in stays; mind your eyes now, my lads!" exclaimed the excited old tar. "There! she's about; she hoists sail again, and is on the starboard tack. Damn those lug sails! I think they were invented by the devil to

send him customers." He continued to describe the movements of the boat until she was visible to the naked eye, across the bar, and in comparative safety. Another and another boat appeared, and was recognized, and crossed the bar in safety. Thirteen boats had followed one another, the first being now abreast of the ruins. They were all under close-reefed foresails. A more gallant sight could not have been witnessed than the way in which the crews did their work, and in which the steersmen watched every squall, meeting with the helm every sea which threatened to swamp them. They all weathered the ruins successively, cheered by the excited crowd as they passed, though those on board heard not the encouraging sounds in the roar of the tempest and the boiling of the surge; but they saw handkerchiefs waved, and they knew that wives and sweethearts were looking on, and they held on their

way without one quaking heart among them. Yes! ye men of Elletweem, on board your boats and in the storm, ye are heroes whom any country would be proud of.

But the fourteenth boat was missing. The friends of those in the boats which had passed had hastened to the landing-place to welcome those belonging to them, but one group had remained in hopeless grief, still watching the boiling surf on the bar, which made a clean break from bank to bank. They were the wives and children of the missing boat's crew, with two or three others who had remained, endeavouring to keep up their hopes after they knew that hope had fled.

"She may have run for Fluker's Bay," suggested one of those bystanders, "instead of beating to windward."

"When did Ramsay Sime's boat run when the other boats took the river?" said a young wife, her eye lighting up for an instant, and

the comforter was silenced. Hours passed away, and the boat did not appear. She never appeared; but one of the crew came home next day by land, having been picked up by a coal-brig while clinging to a mast. He was landed at a neighbouring port. He told the story of the lost boat, which was as follows:—

She was one of the largest boats belonging to the village, having been built for the herring-fishery in the north. There were seven of a crew, the crack crew of Elletweem. They had been far out at sea, for the fish had left the coast, and were returning, deeply laden, when they were caught by the gale. There were those on board who knew their danger; but the young men, elated by their successful capture, laughed at fear, saying that the 'Gannet'—such was the boat's name—would "stand up to any gale that ever the devil piped."

"Ay," said the old steersman, "that she will, but not with such a cargo. Throw the fish overboard if you wish to see your firesides again."

"Down with the mainmast and close reef your foresail, and then let the devil pipe, and he 'll see what the 'Gannet' is made of."

The last directions were instantly complied with, but the crew refused to sacrifice their precious cargo. The fishing had been unsuccessful of late, and all had been reduced to poverty. The steersman's son was especially averse to part with the cargo. He was stoutly backed by his brother and cousin. They said they had no mind to work day and night, and to lose their labour for nothing.

"Better lose labour than life," said the old man. "Once more, throw the fish overboard. I am skipper of this boat, and I will either be obeyed or leave the helm."

"Leave it, father," said his son, "and I'll be skipper. You're getting ower auld for this wark."

The old man gave the tiller to his son, and took his seat on the main thwart of the boat. "May God make you a better steersman than your father this day!" said he. "I wash my hands frae the sin of losing seven lives."

The son was an able seaman, but he had neither the eye nor the hand of his father, old as he was. He soon became aware of the dangerous task he had so rashly undertaken. Once or twice, as a squall came down upon them, and after he had put up the boat's head to the wind, she had been nearly swamped before fetching way again. At last, when, before fetching way, a second squall struck them, and the lee gunwale went under water, his pride gave way, and he cried out, "For God's sake, out with the fish!"

"It is too late," said the old man, and in an instant the boat was full of water. Her heavy iron ballast sunk her at once, and six of the crew perished. One of them clung to the mainmast, and was picked up by the coal-brig we have mentioned. He was brother of the unfortunate steersman, and had backed him up against his father; but he told his tale honestly, taking his full share of the blame, and he said he was "maist sorry that he had not gone down with the crew."

The young man never entered a boat again; he said "he never could forget the sight of his poor auld father's grey head in the weltering sea." He earned his living by gathering shell-fish and selling them.

Many families were rendered almost destitute by the calamity which we have mentioned, and the clergyman thought it his duty to call upon the gentlemen in the neighbourhood to ask contributions for the sufferers.

CHAPTER XVI.

We have naturally a curiosity to be prying and searching into forbidden secrets.—L'Estrange.

Among these, and in the district where Warren now resided, another stranger had taken up his abode, about whom there had been many rumours and many inquiries, but nobody could make anything of the tenant of Kelly Lodge, a large old tumble-down and rather indescribable building, a cross between various styles of architecture. The most modern parts of the building, consisting of four good rooms and kitchen, were in pretty habitable condition, and the present tenant confined himself almost entirely to them. Wild as the place was at the time we speak of, it had

at one time been a residence of no ordinary beauty. The garden and orchard especially had been very fine. The clear stream which rushed past the neglected lawn, to join the ocean at no great distance, showed nooks and brawling rapids, where the greedy pike, and his no less greedy prey, "the trout bedropped with crimson hail," had multiplied almost undisturbed, except by their natural enemy and robber of the streams, the fierce, unsatiable otter. All was wilderness now. The heron was the only fisher visible in the stream, and the weasel frisked about the broken dial, his sharp eye almost out of practice in the absence of danger. The crows had stuck by the old place for generations; they were the lineal descendants of those who had seen it in its glory. Domestic cats had become wild; the woods behind the house were plentifully stocked by them and their wild progeny, who seemed to thrive wonderfully

amidst the general desolation. The view from the lodge was fine as heart could wish. Retiring for about a hundred yards from the steep brow of what was called the Knock-hill, it commanded a majestic view of the German Ocean in its ever-changing aspects—a view which is never tame and which never tires. Wood and lodge and garden were now nearly all in the same state of neglect and disrepair.

But the present tenant seemed quite contented with the place as it was. His habits were as solitary as his dwelling. He was rather cheerful looking than otherwise, with not the slightest appearance of singularity. Had you met him in Pall Mall, you might have taken him for a fashionable clubman; there were both breeding and intelligence in his appearance, but he declined mixing with the society of the neighbourhood, and society was left to imagine the nature of the occupa-

tions or studies with which he contrived to fill up his time in his solitary abode.

The clergyman of the district was the first to break in upon his solitude. He was shown into the library, a large square room, comfortably, if not elegantly, furnished. A glance at the books intimated that they had been selected by a man who knew something about them. There were three fine microscopes, and glass jars and vessels containing great varieties of entomological horrors, which indicated the nature of the proprietor's tastes and studies. Theology was also respectably represented. Indeed, the minister was surprised to see a collection far surpassing what he himself possessed, and which he had imagined was the best and most extensive in the county. But the honest clergyman had little time for further scrutiny, for the door opened, and Mr. Savile entered the library. He greeted the reverend gentle-

man with perfect ease and good breeding. Without asking him the object of his visit, he appeared to wait for the information.

The Doctor retailed the calamity which had befallen the fishers at Elletweem, by which many families had been rendered destitute. He said his own limited means prevented him from being able to give much assistance, and he had taken the liberty of calling upon some of the neighbouring gentlemen, who had liberally enough seconded his endeavours in relieving the destitution in the little village. "I have called upon you, sir," he continued, "upon this begging errand, and though I cannot urge much in favour of the habits or characters of those in whose behalf I appear, yet, in a case of the kind, I think charity not ill-bestowed; if we gave only to the deserving, our liberality would not be much tested."

"Hardly at all," answered Savile; "the deserving or their dependants seldom require

charity or assistance. I think the more undeserving the wretch, the more imperative is the charity, provided it be judiciously bestowed; there are vices and bad habits to be dealt with as well as starvation."

The minister had hardly expected his sentiment to be carried so far, and he was not sure that Savile was in earnest; he hinted as much.

"I am quite serious" was the rejoinder. "I am no anxious philanthropist. I have no reason for being so, if I take into account my own experience of the world; but I think it is more unpleasant to see or hear of a man starving than to relieve the starvation. In such a state it is no time to inquire into character; I would give in charity to my own feelings, without laying claim to extraordinary benevolence."

"I hope," said Stevenson, such was the minister's name, "your motives are higher."

"They are not, I assure you; I think few men deserve to be pitied. The over-driven animal is more to be pitied than the unmerciful blackguard whose vice and necessity have forced him to cruelty; but forced he is, as much as the brute he abuses; so, in the present case, I am quite willing to give my mite without inquiring too curiously into the deserts of the recipients. Is this enough?" he continued, handing a bank-note of some value to the minister.

"It is too much," was the answer. "The fourth part in the mean time will be liberal, and if more be required I shall not scruple to beg again from you."

"As you please," was the indifferent reply; "but pray keep the note, and if any other case occur, apply it as you like. It will save you the trouble of coming so far out of your way."

"And you the annoyance of being intruded

upon, and perhaps subjected to the observation of a spy in the shape of a country minister," hazarded Stevenson, somewhat hardily. "And you are not far wrong," he continued, seeing Savile expressed not the slightest displeasure at his freedom. "I must confess that curiosity had as much to do with my visit as charity."

"Curiosity to know who and what I am," said Savile, a little contemptuously. "I should have thought your profession had been able to raise you above so common a feeling."

"I suspect there is no profession which can raise us above the common feelings of our nature," said the minister; "at least I cannot claim such an altitude for myself; and to confess at once, I was curious to know why a person in your position so sedulously shunned society, and since I came here I must confess again that my curiosity has been increased."

"And yet," was the answer, "I tell you the simple truth when I assure you that your curiosity is quite at fault if it suggest to you anything in the least extraordinary connected with my life and experience."

"I am afraid I have been very rude," said the minister, humbly enough. "I had no right to pry either into your house or your history. I hid my curiosity under the veil of charity. It was mean and dishonourable, and I ask your pardon." He rose to depart.

"Pray be seated," said Savile, quietly, a little amused with the minister's simplicity, and a little touched by his genuine honesty; "and," continued he, "tell me openly what excited your curiosity. I am sure I live quietly enough."

"It was that very quietness," said Stevenson; "there must be some strong reason for a man of fashion and intellect and,"—

glancing at the books and philosophical instruments,—" and information, secluding himself from that society which would welcome him so heartily."

"Then, my dear sir, you are mistaken. There is no strong reason; there was a disappointment, not a very deadly one, and there was an experience of mankind, not a very uncommon one. I am merely a little disgusted at present with my fellow-men, on account of some little matters, and have retired for a while to think about them, and perhaps a few other things."

"Which I must not inquire into," said the minister, simply; but with the very question inquiring with all the cunning he was master of.

"It is not worth inquiry, honestly it is not. I met with the treatment that ninety-nine out of a hundred meet with in misfortune. Upon my word, I was more

amused than hurt. Now I am thankful for the experience. But after years of poverty and privation, I became suddenly rich by an accident. Then it was that I became both hurt and disgusted by the conduct of relations and friends whose former desertion had merely amused me. But a man might as well complain of being denied the society of the learned and wise because he is a fool as of being neglected by the rich because he is poor. When society shuns him, he may rest assured that he wants what it considers a proper ticket of admission. Let him procure it, and the door is open to him. If he do procure it, and choose to remain sulky without, he will punish nobody but himself. There must be different ranks and stations—the commander-in-chief to the private. The officers will keep their own position, and the privates must be content to keep theirs. I had suffered much

without complaining, but I sickened at the way I was now approached by friends and brothers, *once so called.* Yes, I was disgusted with mankind for acting," continued he, more lightly, "as mankind has always acted, and will always act, and I came here to endeavour to learn to be philosophical enough to laugh at it all. I may perhaps go amongst them again, and laugh while I act in the comedy myself."

"And so from the study of man you have turned to that of the animal kingdom," said Stevenson, looking at the microscope and jars.

"Hardly turned. I have been fond of the subject all my life. But I cannot call myself a student. I have until lately merely read. I almost wish I had confined myself to more desultory reading; but I have begun the study, and shall continue to try if I can get any light."

"You appear to have all the means and appliances for obtaining the light."

"They increase the darkness; the more perfect the microscope, the more profound the horrible mystery of animal life."

"I am fond of the study myself," said the minister, "and I think I can partly understand you, but I am trespassing on your time; I came to beg for money, I am now robbing you of your time."

"Not at all. If you are an experienced naturalist, you may be able to explain what appears to me a horrible mystery. I have been endeavouring to ascertain if there be any reason or necessity for the cruelty, torture, and continual destruction with which the whole system of animal life is carried on. The law seems to be, that one animal's pleasure should consist in another's pain—the strong preying upon the weak, and sometimes the weakest upon the strongest; all of

them bountifully furnished with the means and instruments for exercising their particular cruelties." He rose and walked to the window. "Look at that swift cleaving the air. Is he not beautiful in his enjoyment of the free expanse of heaven? Can anything be more graceful than those sweeps and curves and darts and sudden pauses? What command of the subtle element he floats in; what power of wing; what exquisite adaptation of form and muscle! And yet all his power and instinct are devoted to the task of capturing and devouring the insects he lives upon. Every dart of his elegant form is a movement in the path of destruction; every snap of his bill announces a sudden death; he is torturing and being tortured at the same time. Even smaller than the insects he devours are the living things which prey upon him, lurk among his feathers, bury themselves in his flesh, torture him beyond

the power of sufferance, till he has been known to dash himself to death against the first object which promised to put an end to his despair."

"And is this all you can draw from the study of Nature?"

"No, only a general conclusion. I know not a nobler promise of enlightenment than that held out to the student of animal life and animal organization; the surpassing wisdom exhibited in the structure of bone and muscle, nerve and artery; the marvellous arrangement of the ten thousand different atoms for the purposes of supporting life; the amazing differences in the construction of different classes and orders; in a word, the infinite number of forms in which life can exist, and the equally infinite variety of conditions attached to its tenure."

"It is, indeed, a noble study," said the minister. "At another time I should like

much to resume this conversation, if you will allow me; but I have already trespassed too long on your time;" and he rose and took his leave, thanking Savile again for so readily giving help to the poor fishermen's families.

Savile thanked the minister for giving him the opportunity of helping them, and said he would enjoy a visit from him at his leisure time.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is a golden chain let down from heaven,
Whose links are bright and even,
That falls like sleep on lovers, and combines
The soft and sweetest minds
In equal knots.—Ben Jonson.

Both Warren and Savile, in a short time, began to mix freely with the families in the neighbourhood. They were acknowledged by all to be valuable additions to the rather limited society of the district. Florence Warren especially became the object of much attention. Young Hay speedily achieved his ardently wished for introduction. He tried to make the most of it by taking every opportunity to endeavour to render himself particularly agreeable; but the good-natured

lad made very little progress. Florence listened to him, and laughed with him and, he suspected, *at* him; but he was quite willing to submit to this, provided he could only keep near her. Nay, his admiration and devotion seemed to become more intense as his chance of creating any interest in their object visibly diminished. His worship was indeed deep and sincere. He had never imagined any human being so lovely, and the only aim in life worth attaining seemed to him to be to call such a treasure his own. Alas! we have all, or at least most of us, bowed before our idols, and many of us have humbled ourselves in vain; but it is a glorious delusion, the early dream, the ecstatic devotion of youth. Concealment of his feelings was out of the question; in fact, he cared not for concealment; but by and by his admiration was so openly manifested that it became unpleasant both to Warren

and Florence. It was especially disagreeable to Philip Charteris, who resolved to speak to the young man on the subject. He very soon had an opportunity. They had embarked one fine morning in August on board a boat of Philip's for a day's mackerel-fishing. They were both good boatmen, besides being perfectly acquainted with the rather difficult navigation of the river. It happened that on this day Philip's usual boatman, Tom Gaul, had disappeared somewhere, but the young men thought it no hardship to get underweigh themselves. They were soon floating down the river with a breeze all too gentle for their sport, for mackerel-fishing requires a speed of about three knots an hour; and by and by it fell dead calm, not an air of wind was stirring, and as the tide turned they had just to submit to be carried back again to their starting-point. Hay was very dull, not even

attempting to shoot the mallards which were floating around them. Charteris, although at the helm, had nothing to do, as the boat had not even steerage way through the water. He resolved to take this opportunity of speaking to Hay on the Warren question, though he felt it to be delicate ground, considering his own interest in the matter.

"Robert," said he at last, "will you allow me as a friend, and a sincere one, to take a liberty with you? The subject is a delicate one, and I would not willingly annoy you."

"Certainly, Philip, and perhaps I may be tempted to take a liberty in my turn," answered Hay, guessing pretty near what the subject would be.

"Well," continued Charteris, "you told me yourself some time ago that you admired Miss Warren very much. I can see that your admiration has not decreased since you became acquainted with her."

"And I can see that other people look upon Miss Warren with something like my feelings, and that their admiration has not decreased more than mine. Have you seen that, Philip—you who are so quick-sighted?" said Hay, making a pretty good rally, for the young man's intelligence and address had actually been improved by the action of the high feeling which had taken possession of him. He wondered himself at the sudden change which had come over him within a few short weeks. The change was from boy to man—a change in which strong feeling will do more in an hour sometimes than the action of years.

Philip paused a moment after the home-thrust contained in Hay's answer and question, and then said, as quietly as he could, "It would be idle to pretend not to understand you. I do admire Miss Warren very much, much more than I thought I could

admire any one; but I do not show my feelings in public so much as you, and it was on this point I wished to speak to you. Everybody knows your sentiments as well as I do."

"My dear Philip, do you really imagine that no one knows yours?" again retorted Hay, with some success.

"Well," answered his friend, "I was not aware that my conduct in that respect had given rise to any remark; but granting that it has, I am quite sure I have done nothing to annoy Miss Warren by any demonstration on my part."

"And you mean to say that I have given her annoyance?" asked his companion, very quickly, and with some appearance of displeasure.

"Frankly, I suspect so. Forgive me when I say that I think I can see both Miss Warren and her father are a little annoyed at your very pointed attention."

"Upon my word, Philip, you are jealous!" cried the young man, not at all displeased at the idea.

"You are entirely mistaken," was the answer; "for I do not think you have the slightest chance of success,—if indeed you are serious, which is another question I was to ask you."

"As serious as yourself, Philip, and as determined. So now you know all, and we are declared rivals. Let us do our best, and let not the loser complain."

"No," said Philip; "I shall play at no such game with you or with any one. I shall, on the contrary, leave the field entirely to yourself until you are quite satisfied one way or another."

"Then you have reason for believing that you will succeed, and that I have no chance," said the impetuous young man. "Philip, I have been quite open

with you; is it fair to keep me in the dark?"

"I shall be as open as you have been. I have not the slightest reason for presuming that Miss Warren regards me in any light beyond that of the most common acquaintance. I have never said a word to her beyond the limits of common courtesy; and to be as open as you could wish, I suspect very much that the sooner you and I learn to subdue our feelings the better will it be for us both."

"Why, is there any one else in the field?"

"You cannot surely have been blind to the marked attention and respect which Mr. Savile pays her, nor to the attention and pleasure with which she listens to him."

"Pshaw! he is an old fellow—might be her father."

"He may be an old fellow as compared with you and me, but he is not old—nor too

old to captivate a young and accomplished woman. He is one of the most pleasant and best-informed men that I have ever met, and his manners are beyond question; and putting myself entirely out of the question, as I believe I am, I would advise you, as a friend, to desist from your pursuit—you will not succeed."

"Would it be too much to inquire," said the young man, a good deal piqued, "on what you found your very decided opinion? for, to do you justice, you seldom express one without good grounds."

"I can scarcely say—on many things so trifling that you may laugh at them. Well, for instance, when I have heard her speaking of you, it was in a tone so devoid of interest—for I was watching—that I cannot think her feelings are engaged in any way; and when you go up to her on any occasion—for I watched that too—

she always retains the same complete self-possession."

"And when Savile appears, does the self-possession disappear?"

"I cannot say that; and I have watched that more narrowly than anything. No, I cannot say that; but she evidently likes his conversation. I once liked it myself; and, allow me to say, his tastes and accomplishments are more likely to tell in his favour than yours."

"That's because I shoot and fish and hunt, I suppose? Why, so do you."

"I have put myself out of the question."

"Well, so does her father."

"Yes; but his tastes and acquirements are very far beyond fishing and hunting; and besides, you know," continued Philip, laughing, "he is not to marry her."

"Oh, I see now," cried Hay, a good deal mortified. "I am not a literary man—I

cannot talk about Dante and Milton and Spenser, and all that; but I am reading hard, Philip, and I suppose I can learn as well as you or Savile. I can read Marmontel's tales with the dictionary," said the very simple young fellow.

Philip could hardly refrain from laughing in his face, but he did. "Hay," said he, gravely, "this is not fair—I will not pursue the subject. I cannot go the length of saying that I wish you all success; but if I could assist your views, I think I would. Let us not quarrel. I have spoken my mind to you. Act as you like."

"Pardon me, Philip. You began this conversation, and it *is* fair that I should know your reason why I should not presume to aspire to the hand of Miss Warren. In point of rank, I presume, I am her equal?"

"Probably her superior. I know nothing of Warren's rank farther than that he is a

gentleman, and Miss Warren has been highly educated, and you have yourself admitted that you did not lay claim to your being so."

"Yes, Philip," he said, with an honest burst of confession, "I have told myself that a hundred times; but I cannot help it. I must go on until I have proof that there is no hope. Hallo!" cried he, suddenly, "keep your luff, Charteris, but there is no wind. Take an oar, man," he continued, taking one himself, and beginning to row vigorously. They were fast drifting on a shoal. A few minutes' rowing placed them again in deep water.

"I was shamefully careless," cried Philip; "but the false keel is a great assistance beating to windward."

"A narrow escape from shipwreck!" cried Hay. "We should have been swamped but for that false keel!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Savile had latterly accepted freely the hospitality of his neighbours. What a difference a few pleasant individuals make in the society of a quiet neighbourhood! Warren and his daughter and Savile—three certainly not ostentatious individuals—had so changed the social atmosphere of the place, that even the quiet Sir Robert Charteris and his lady, who had lived rather reserved, now felt more pleasure in mixing with the surrounding inhabitants than they had ever done before. With Lady Charteris, Florence was so great a favourite that few days passed without their meeting. To Florence the friendship was invaluable. Long deprived of the care

and guidance of a mother,—indeed, she had scarcely known what it was,—there were many small matters in which the advice and assistance of the high-born lady were of great service to her. Gradually their relationship almost appeared like mother and daughter. No one was better pleased to see the intimacy than Warren, who knew well what inestimable advantage the society of one so highbred was to an inexperienced girl, however good the talents or excellent the disposition. Florence's rides were often exchanged for long drives with Lady Charteris,—Warren, Sir Robert, and Philip frequently accompanying them on horseback; though oftener than Philip liked, Sir Robert and Warren would leave the beaten path for the greensward and the gorse, for neither would have ridden a mile upon a hard road if he could help it. It was on one of these excursions that Savile had accidentally met them. He

was mounted on a magnificent gray horse, three-parts bred, with bone to carry a man half as heavy again as Savile, and spirit proportioned to his strength. It was the first time that the other gentlemen had seen Savile on horseback; he was quite at home in the saddle. It was no slight addition to Savile's reputation that he was an accomplished horseman, riding the strong, fiery animal under him with the perfect ease and self-possession which perfect mastery and good temper give to the man over the brute. Even a rude and ignorant jockey looks a hero when starting on his race, so high is our opinion of skill and courage. When to these qualities are joined refined tastes and high intellect, there are few who can refuse their enthusiastic admiration. This Philip did not refuse. He saw that his opponent was a *man*, and he did not hesitate to confess that, in point of manly

accomplishments, he was one of the highest he had met with. He carried these with the ease of a gentleman. In all his bearing there was that unaffected simplicity which cannot be acquired by itself, but which is the result of high cultivation in refined society. The ride was delightful. The weather was breezy and *crisp*, and the party rushed along, carried away by surrounding influences, from whatever cares any of them might be burdened with. Perhaps the older members of the group were the happiest; often, as people get older, they become more alive to the charms of the passing landscape, the blue mountains, the majestic trees, the dancing streams, which leave a finer photograph on the tempered organ than even upon the more keen and sensitive eye of youth.

The party at last separated. Sir Robert and Lady Charteris, Warren and Florence,

pursuing their way homeward; while Savile and Philip agreed to have a scamper over the moor. The scamper was a very wild one, over ground very broken and irregular. More than once it required good horsemanship to avoid holes and declivities, where a sudden plunge might have been followed by severe consequences; but both knew what they were about, and the dangers of the road, if they might be called so, only added to the pleasant excitement of the ride. After an hour's sharp work, both horses and riders were willing to slacken the pace, until they came to a walk, and then they naturally fell into that easy conversation which the circumstances of their companionship suggested.

The first time Philip had seen Savile enthusiastically delighted was at a representation of 'Don Giovanni,' when even in Thriveport some of the first artists of the day had condescended to exhibit their tran-

scendent talents. Philip had observed the keen delight with which he had heard "Il mio tesoro," and his air of disappointment when there was an *encore*. Philip asked if he had been right in his supposition.

"Quite right," Savile answered; "the audience ought never to *encore* any piece. The more delightful, the less ought they to do it. They should be contented to remain in the full enjoyment of the first impression. The *surprise* is over, and *it* is great part of the charm. If the artiste were wise, he would never comply with the riotous demand for an *encore*. Mozart's great work is what an enthusiastic writer has called 'an unbroken procession of purple thought,' the melody, the harmony, the exquisite instrumental murmur. I think music is the only science or art in which man can attain perfection, in which he can produce a work where no defect can be seen. In writing and

painting and sculpture men deal with known things, to which all have a key, but an original melody is the composer's *own*, which God planted in *his* mind alone, and for which even he is not answerable, for he knows not how it came there more than the principle of life. I speak, of course, of pure *melody;* harmony can, so far, be learned by any one."

"You have studied music, then?" inquired Philip.

"Yes, and from an early age; and this study, and other things, have cost me, what is generally supposed to be the grand object of life, *success in the world*. Because, if a man be really devoted to the study of music, it is by far too engrossing to permit of his following out any other important pursuit."

"But you made progress in studies which you liked?"

"Oh, yes—pretty fair progress; but I

never composed a piece of music which was equal to a third or fourth rate author. I have sold pictures, but at such prices as convinced me that they were very inferior productions. I have been rather more successful in literature, and I dare say, if I had persevered, I might have gained a shabby livelihood by it; but nothing I have ever published has been very favourably received, and some things have been rather roughly handled. I think, if I had devoted my whole time to literature, I might have succeeded, but I frittered my mind into three; and the third part of a mind will not do now-a-days. By the sudden death of a relation, I became rich, much richer than ever I expected to be, and I have dreamed away my life for some years, partly with one thing, partly with another. But I am prosing about myself, and you must be sadly tired of it."

"On the contrary, I should like more of what you call prosing. I am sorry to say that I am rather ignorant of the arts which you have talked of, but I have *read* a good deal—my father indulged me in *that*."

"Few things can be better than a knowledge of good literature; it is food for thought in all time," said Savile.

They parted, well pleased with their day's exercise.

CHAPTER XIX.

There are some happy moments in this lone
And desolate world of ours that will repay
The toil of struggling through it, and atone
For many a long sad night and weary day.

Ay! and Savile had been lured from his den, and fascinated, as younger men had been, by such grace and beauty and intelligence as he had never before seen combined in a female form. Curiosity had been his first stimulant. He wondered if personal charms, so rare and dazzling, were supported by the still rarer charms of modesty and intellect. He found, to his utter astonishment, that mere face and form were the least of Florence Warren's attractions. He was much struck, and he meditated deeply. He had long

before arrived at a conclusion by which he intended his life should be guided. He believed that in this life immunity from misfortune and suffering was all that a man could expect in the shape of happiness,—that positive pleasures were always necessarily attended with antagonistic inflictions,—and that the best way to pass through life was to avoid its deceitful excitements, and sternly order feeling and passion out of doors. He had long "hung loose upon society," in the belief that there was nothing worth trying to attach himself to. He was by nature honourable, liberal, and humane; but his actions had been guided by feeling merely. He had rarely thought them worth reasoning about. But after seeing Florence, a new idea seemed to take possession of him. He began to think how good it might be to have a deep interest in life, and such an interest! It would be pleasant to find

that he had been mistaken, and that there were loyal hearts and liberal minds among the throng he had despised. One loyal heart he knew sufficient to redeem the sins of ten thousand. He had given the order, but his subjects, or rather his rulers, had refused to obey. At the age of forty, man acquires not such command. Let him wait until age has weakened those turbulent elements which war against his peace—then, when there is nothing left to conquer, he can boast of victory. Savile found that his assumed conquest was slipping away from him. Day after day his pococurante philosophy was deserting him. As we have said, he meditated deeply on again committing himself to the chance which he had already experienced. He had been shipwrecked once, when in the vigour of sentiment—was it wise to risk another calamity? Was it likely that a being so captivating would listen to him, who, when

endowed with the graces and spirit of youth, had failed and been rejected with something more than indifference. There were other circumstances which dissuaded him from the attempt. He could not help seeing that younger men had started for the prize. He gave himself very little trouble about poor Robert Hay: he saw from the first that he could not be the winning man, but Philip Charteris was a dangerous rival. He had been distanced before by one far inferior to Philip in those accomplishments which are supposed to find favour in the eyes of beauty. Why attempt an encounter where defeat seemed almost certain? Why, indeed! It was too late to put the question. He could not help himself. He discovered, to his no small alarm, that he was no longer master of his own thoughts—hardly of his own actions. He made a magnanimous resolve: he would leave the field of folly to the fools

who chose to risk their happiness in it; he only regretted he had been lured from his seclusion to mingle in so idle a chase. Pshaw! he had been merely dreaming. He was now wide awake; he was a stoic again.

He behaved manfully for a whole fortnight; he took to his books with an industry which promised great results. He sat doggedly at his tasks, and turned over the pages, and made notes, and shadowed out systems; and generally found at the end of a day's hard application, that he might just as well have been turning over a ream of white paper: all the wisdom he had been endeavouring to amass had melted into air, leaving neither fact nor principle behind.

So he surrendered; the studies were, like many other good things, deferred for a more convenient season. Savile was not a vain man, though quite conscious of being far

superior, in point of information and accomplishments, to most men he had met in general society.

Philip Charteris was the rock ahead, and he measured himself coolly against him. He was quick in discerning character; and, with regret, he acknowledged that he had seldom met with any one more likely to succeed, even with the best and most beautiful of womankind. Savile knew he was far from being a bad man; nay, he was, barring the sourness which certain experiences in life had caused, a very good one; but he knew he was *not* so good a man as Philip, in all that best becomes a man, and that at his best he had never been so. That tall, powerful, and perfect form contained almost as powerful and perfect a soul; which, indeed, appeared in every glance and action and speech. All was truth: the truth of a noble heart, which would have deemed false-

hood or deceit a kind of mental suicide. Honour was as naturally implanted in his mind as strength in his sinewy limbs. There was unmistakable loyalty in the whole expression and bearing, supported by an unmistakable intellect.

What chance had he against such a man? He was far from being an old man; nay, he was in the full vigour of his faculties, both bodily and mental. But he would not deceive himself. He knew well that there is an affinity between the fresh opening springs of pure youthful natures, which cannot exist after those have been chilled by the ungenial experiences of life. Still, hope would fight his battle for him, and tell her flattering tale in his ear. There was truth in it, too, or he would not have listened. He was rich, handsome, elegant in manners and refined in tastes, well born, and qualified in every respect to be what is thought

"worth a lady's eye." With these attributes and advantages, he knew success was, with ninety-nine girls out of a hundred, almost certain, but he had a quivering misgiving that Florence was the hundredth. He felt he was becoming a better man under the influence of the one particular star which now shone in his horoscope. If he was unsuccessful again, he would retire for ever from a struggle in which there was nothing but disappointment and sorrow.

CHAPTER XX.

Look here, upon this picture, and on this.—HAMLET.

A DULL, dark cloud had passed over the days of his youth, whose shade continued to darken his existence. He and an elder brother were the sons of a man of rank but of small fortune, whose great aim was to make his sons educated men. With the younger he succeeded; the other had had good talents, but could not apply them to the cultivation of knowledge further than it behoved a gentleman to acquire. He and his brother had few tastes in common, but it turned out that they had one. It would have been better that even that had not existed.

Francis Savile was about twenty years old, and his brother Clement twenty-two, when, for the first time in their lives, their ideas and inclinations took the same course. Both fell deeply, we may say desperately, in love with a young girl who came from a distant part of the country to visit their mother. She was a being for a boy to love. She was beautiful; her spirit and glee gave brightness and delight to all who approached her; but all excitement has its reaction, and, at times, she would be almost as unnaturally quiet and subdued as she generally was animated and impetuous. Clement rejoiced with her spirit when on its wildest wing; the more studious brother waited for the quiet hour; and the change was frequently as rapid as that from sunshine to shade. She was not long in discovering the double conquest which she had made: with a girl's vanity, she played off the one brother against

the other, keeping a hold of both. It was dangerous work playing with brothers in this way, and such brothers; but she knew not the elements she was tampering with. She was enjoying her first taste of power, and she was intoxicated to find how absolute it was over the two strong men, whose strongest resolves were now subject to her slightest whim. She soon began to perceive, however, that it was no girl's work she was at. She had stirred two fierce natures to a rivalry which she began to tremble at, though she felt her power. Things could not continue long thus. She herself was caught in the net she had so thoughtlessly worked; it was one of the games of life on which happiness and honour are staked. Fate held the bank against the three. More than once there had been fierce words between those with whom there had been little sympathy; they now looked on each other with a jealous

passion, which kindred only rendered more intense. Both would have rejoiced to have had an alien in blood for a rival, for blood forbade more than simple enmity. All at once the rivalry ceased. Julia Beverly loved the elder brother, and Francis Savile saw his chance was gone for ever. He was smitten to the core, but he was enraged as well as smitten, for he felt he had been trifled with, and that his noblest feelings had been made the plaything of a woman's vanity.

Clement was aware that the truth was known, but he showed no sign of triumph. The rivalry had ceased, and his dislike to his brother ceased with it. But Francis would hold no communication with him, nor with her who had deceived him. Some change was going on already, for Julia Beverly was no longer the bright, bird-like being she had been. She was pale, depressed;

but at times there was a flash in her eye, and a quiver on the proud lip, which told Francis Savile he was not the only loser in the game which the three had been playing. Who was to win?

At last, one morning, he learned that Julia had gone home to her father—a solitary old man, who lived in great seclusion on a small estate more than thirty miles off: an old serving-man and his wife were their only attendants; and the wonder was, how one brought up in so lonely a way as Julia had been could be possessed of the life and spirit and gladness which animated her and all around her; but so it was. The wild bird had learned her wild song in the wilderness, unchecked by the artificial trammels of civilized society. The song was sad enough now; and the flight—alas! poor Julia!

All three were changed, and Clement Savile as much as any of them. That spirit

was laid for a time. Who will say now that fear did not knock at that bold heart. He cowered at what has quelled the bravest—his own deeds.

He expected something or other, and he got it—a letter—a simple letter, directed in a shaky old hand. How that little bit of paper shook the strong man! The writing was feeble, but the words were not:—"Come here to-morrow, or you will rue the day in which you were born." That was all.

He must obey. He never hesitated about that; but he would as soon have faced the fiend himself as the old man with the shaky handwriting. His gig was ordered, and his strong horse was harnessed, and away he went by himself. The day was dull and lowering, but he was rather thankful that the sun did not shine and mock him. His brother was at the gate as he drove out; there was no exchange of word or sign, but Francis

looked after his brother long and fixedly until he was out of sight. He, too, was glad the sun did not shine.

Clement drove on—ten, twenty miles—at top speed. This would not do. He stopped at the last inn on the road, and, having procured another horse, he left his own till his return. It was beginning to get dusk, for it was winter, and the roads were bad. But the horse must go, and go at speed; and Clement did not spare him. It was an old screw, but he had blood in him; and now that he had got warmed to his work, he stepped out in gallant style, spurning the loose stones from his feet, and plashing through the mire with a rush and a noise which seemed to give him fresh mettle for his reckless pace.

Not a soul on that dreary road! No need of the whip now: the horse had entered into the spirit of the thing,—he would run till he dropped down dead.

Clement pulled up,—he is in no hurry now.

A rude gate was by the roadside; he knew where that led to.

He waited till the horse was quiet, after his mad race, and then tied him to the gate-post, threw a rug over his reeking hide, and slowly took his way on foot to the house. The avenue was thickly planted with trees on both sides; they showered down their withered leaves, as if despising their protection from the storm.

Clement heeded neither trees, nor leaves, nor darkness, nor storm; he rather liked the "rocking of the battlements." He approached the house.

He was expected. The door stood open, and a light was in the hall; the old serving-man was by it, who, as soon as he saw Clement, retired through a side door, and another old man appeared—the man with the shaky handwriting. There was no shaking now. His hair was white, and his features were as if cut in marble. There was

expression in them, but no one could say what it was. His hand was firm as he took up the light, and signed to Savile to follow him. Clement followed.

The old man led the way to a chamber which was already lit up. There was a table in the middle of the room, and on it was a dead child. The old man pointed to it, and spoke for the first time:—"That is yours; take it away, and take my curse with it." He walked out of the room.

Clement Savile was a bold man, but the old man's look shook him. It was for a moment only. He took off his cloak, and wrapped the child in it, and walked through the hall. On his way he heard a heavy fall and a shriek. The fall was like that of a body: he knew the shriek; he had heard that voice in its mirth; it was different now.

"On, on, man!"—this is not a night to loiter in, and with such a burden! The trees are groaning as he passes, and the wind wails

around him in rude harmony. Anon it rises, and tries to tear the cloak from his burden, but he wraps it tenderly and firmly round, and walks on. He seems to have made up his mind to something which gives him relief, for he walks firmly, and with all the elasticity of his powerful frame.

He is again driving homewards, with his burden carefully placed between his feet; the horse again warms to his work, and pushes bravely on. He reaches the inn where he left his own horse, and, without delay, gets him again in harness. Without alighting, he calls for wine, drinks it off, and drives on again. Twenty miles to go!

The storm increased in fury, but he drove carefully. Not a soul on the road,—surely not, on such a night as this; and yet he thought he sometimes heard the sound of horses' feet behind him. He looked, but he could see nothing in the darkness. He pulled up once, when he was almost sure he heard the sound

close behind him, but it ceased as he came to a halt. He drove on again. He heard the sound again,—at least, he thought so. He drove faster. The horse was fresh and willing, but, fast as he drove, he still thought he heard the sound of horses' hoofs. There was no mistake,—he heard the clank against the stone. Was he pursued? He pulled up again, and the sounds ceased. But this time he saw his pursuer. He had just topped a hill, and descended on the other side about fifty yards; looking back, he saw on the very top of the hill a dark figure, faintly relieved against the dull sky. It was standing quite still. He again drove on, as fast as his powerful animal could go. The sounds still continued. Ten miles to go yet!

It was a fearful drive. "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us." Fancy began to play her tricks too. Once or twice he imagined he felt the thing at his feet move, and once

he was so convinced of it, that, in spite of his pursuer, he pulled up and unwrapped the child. It was cold and stiff: it had never moved in this world. He almost wished that his fate had been the same. It was the first time he had felt real remorse; but that stricken white-haired old man, and the dull fall he had heard, and the shriek, and the avenger behind him—for such he could not help picturing him to be,—God! he heard the iron hoofs thundering in the rear!—all these would have unnerved even a man of no ordinary strength, and they unnerved him. There was danger before as well as behind; there was a ford to pass: in the morning it had been deep enough, and he had had some difficulty in crossing; it would now be so swollen with the rain, that there was small probability that he would be able to take the gig through the water. He descended the hill which sloped down to the ford. The water was over bank and brae for two

hundred yards. He pulled up and listened. Not a sound. There was only one way for it. He took the horse out of the gig, divested him of his harness, all except the bearing-rein, carefully placed his burden before him, and took the water. The current was deep and strong, and carried him some way down the stream. Instinctively he held his burden above water, for fear of wetting it, while he directed the horse with as skilful an arm as ever ruled that noble animal. He landed at the other side, halted a moment, as well to give his horse breath as to look behind and listen. He saw nothing, for in the hollow it was almost quite dark; but he heard a plunge on the opposite side of the stream, and he gave his beast the rein. He had the start now, and would keep it. In three miles he paused not nor looked behind, but he knew as well as if he had seen him that he was there, and at last the thundering of horses' hoofs was close behind

him. Ere he could determine what to do, the horseman came up at full speed. With a wild shout of derision, he passed him like an embodied hurricane.

Clement pulled up, and walked the horse quietly. He knew now who the horseman was—his brother!

He continued at a walk. He had much to think about, but hitherto he had been too much occupied with his pursuer to be able to think. His work must be finished to-night; the child must be concealed some way or other. He was tired and jaded. Such tear and wear of body and mind as he had undergone that day told even on his iron frame; but there was no rest for him yet,—no rest while that in the cloak was above ground. Well, it would soon be over now. He arranged his plans.

Home again. He opened the gate, but before riding up to the stable, he deposited the burden among some thick bushes. He

then gave his horse to the stable-boy, and walked to his own chamber till all was quiet. To work again. The cloak and contents were where he left them, but it struck him that they had been disturbed. Was he watched? Where was his brother?

Well, he could not help himself. He took the way to an old outhouse which had not been used for years; it was paved with coarse flagstones, one of which he removed with a pickaxe, loosened the earth, and threw it out with his hands. When the hole was deep enough, he placed the little body in it, covered it with the earth, and replaced the stone. He had brought a dark lantern with him, which was shaded so as to give no more light than what was necessary to let him see what he was doing. His work finished, he stood up, and he saw in the obscurity a dim figure with folded arms watching him! His brother!

Clement did not even start. He had

almost expected him. He, too, folded his arms, and looked firmly across the rude grave at him. They had been brought up from childhood together. It was no child's play now. Francis was the first to break silence.

"So! murder, too!" a fitting end to the play.

"You are mistaken," answered Clement, so calmly that Francis was astonished. He expected a burst of passion: Clement was much more composed than he.

"What means this dreadful work, then? Explain it, or, by heaven, brother as you are, I will denounce you to the law!"

"Do it!" was the cold, contemptuous answer. "You have attempted revenge before now, but your vengeance will not fall upon me. It will fall somewhere though, if you choose. Why do you hesitate?"

"Where will it fall?"

"As if you did not know! On *her* and the old man!" Clement was mistaken there.

The old man was dead. That dull fall was the last of him.

"I am tired of this," said Clement; "let us make an end of it, and then work your will." And so he told him how he had been sent for; that he believed the child to have been stillborn; and that he had brought it away and concealed it, to conceal the shame of her whom he had ruined. "And now," said he, "you have all the information I can give you: if you wish it said before a magistrate, I am ready. Take your choice; I do not ask you to think of the consequences—you know them, and you dare not fulfil your threat! Boy, I defy you!" And he strode firmly out of the building, and left Francis by himself.

"I dare not!" said Francis to himself; "but this is no longer a place for me."

Next day he fled from his home, leaving a few lines for his mother, so incoherent that she could make little of them. He had been her favourite son, and she pined for his loss.

She saw the cloud on Clement's brow, and she knew he was the cause of her loss. Grief brought her to the bed of death, and Clement stood alone by her at the last hour.

Clement followed his mother to the grave. He had other things to think about now. He felt that he had murdered the old man, and nipped in the bud his glorious flower. His remorse was great. He made the only reparation now in his power. He married Julia. The white robe of the bride—the bridal ring—the maidens she stood amongst in her assumed purity—the wreaths and the flowers—fallen, how fallen was the pride of Julia! But Clement went through his part manfully,—behaved to Julia with the respect and attention befitting the occasion.

END OF VOL. I.

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